

RABBIS, LANGUAGE AND TRANSLATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Exposed to multiple languages as a result of annexation, migration, pilgrimage and its position on key trade routes, the Roman Palestine of Late Antiquity was a border area where Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic dialects were all in common use. This study analyses the way scriptural translation was perceived and practised by the rabbinic movement in this multilingual world. Drawing on a wide range of classical rabbinic sources, including unused manuscript materials, Willem F. Smelik traces developments in rabbinic thought and argues that foreign languages were deemed highly valuable for the lexical and semantic light they shed on the meanings of lexemes in the holy tongue. Key themes, such as the reception of translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, multilingualism in society, and rabbinic rules for translation, are discussed at length. This book will be invaluable for students of ancient Judaism, rabbinic studies, Old Testament studies, early Christianity and translation studies.

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RABBIS, LANGUAGE
AND TRANSLATION IN
LATE ANTIQUITY

WILLEM F. SMELIK



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Voor Marian

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I do realize that more could be said and done than I have been able to accomplish here, and I hope to work on related issues in the near future. It would have been nice to work on this manuscript some more, but having siphoned off some chapters already, this book had to come to an end. Several ideas and parts of chapters have been presented at conferences and symposia, where I learned much from the responses I received, and some earlier pen exercises for parts of this book were published in the *Journal for the Aramaic Bible*, the series *Judaism in Context* and *BZAW*. My thanks for permission to use and elaborate on these materials to the publishers: Brill, Gorgias Press and De Gruyter, and their editors: Bas ter Haar Romeny, George Kiraz, Ludwig Morenz and Stefan Schorch.

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Abbreviations

General, journals, series, monographs and dictionaries

AB	The Aramaic Bible
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJS Review	Association for Jewish Studies Review
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ANRW	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ArSt	Aramaic Studies
Arukh	A. Kohut, ערוך השלם (Vienna: George Brög, 1842–1984)
AS	Additional Series
b.	ben, bar (as part of a patronym)
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BCTP	A Bilingual Concordance to the Targum of the Prophets
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BiOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BIOSCS	Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BTA	Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	Ignace I. Gelb et al. (eds.), <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964–)
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica, New Testament
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
CRAIBL	Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
CULGS	Cambridge University Library Genizah Series
CWT	J. Levy, <i>Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim und einen grossen Theil des rabbinischen Schrifthums</i> (2 vols.; repr.; Köln: Joseph Melzer Verlag, 1959).

DJBA	M. Sokoloff, <i>A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period</i> (Dictionaries of Talmud, Midrash and Targum, 2; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990).
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DJPA	M. Sokoloff, <i>A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods</i> (Dictionaries of Talmud, Midrash and Targum, 3; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003).
DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica
FJB	Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge
HALAT	Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IOTS	International Organization for Targumic Studies
JAB	Journal for the Aramaic Bible
JAOS	Journal for the American Oriental Society
JBA	Jewish Babylonian Aramaic
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCP	Jewish and Christian Perspectives
JiC	Judaism in Context
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JLA	Jewish Literary Aramaic
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JPA	Jewish Palestinian Aramaic
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JSHL	Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JSQ	Jewish Studies Quarterly
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
MARI	MARI: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires
MGWJ	Monatschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums
OBC	Orientalia Biblica et Christiana
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OrHex	Field, <i>Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt; sive Veterum Interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta. Post Flaminium Nobilium, Drusium, et Montefalconium, adhibita etiam versione Syrohexaplari</i> (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875).
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PAAJR	Proceedings of the Americal Academy of Jewish Research

par.	parallel
PN	personal name
RB	Révue Biblique
REJ	Revue des études juives
RevQ	Révue de Qumran
RRJ	Review of Rabbinic Judaism
SAIS	Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
STJHC	Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture
SYAP	M. Sokoloff and Y. Yahalom, שירים ארמיים של יהודי, ארץ ישראל בתקופה הביזנטית (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999).
TECC	Textos y estudios 'cardenal Cisneros'
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TSMJ	Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WO	Die Welt des Orients
WTM	J. Levy, Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim (4 vols.; Berlin: Benjamin Harz, 1924).
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WZJT	Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie
YOS	Yale Oriental Series
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZPE	Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Primary sources

Ant.	Antiquities of the Jews
Apion	Against Apion
Arak.	Arakhin
ARN A	Avot de Rabbi Nathan A
ARN B	Avot de Rabbi Nathan B
A. Zar.	Avoda Zara
Av.	Avot
b.	Babylonian Talmud (followed by name of tractate)
B. Bat.	Bava Batra
Bek.	Bekhorot
Ber.	Berakhot
Beṣ.	Beṣa
Bik.	Bikkurim

B. Meṣ.	Bava Meṣia
B. Qam.	Bava Qamma
Cant. R.	Canticles Rabba
Conf. Ling.	<i>De confusione linguarum</i>
Dem.	Demai
Deut. R.	Deuteronomy Rabba
Edu.	Eduyyot
Ev. Rab.	Evel Rabbati
En.	Enoch
Eruv.	Eruvin
Est. R.	Esther Rabba
Exod. R.	Exodus Rabba
FragTg, FragTg ^{PVNL}	Fragmentary Targum (different versions)
Gen. R.	Genesis Rabba
Git.	Gittin
Ḥag.	Ḥagiga
Ḥal.	Ḥalla
Hor.	Horayot
Ḥul.	Ḥullin
JPS	Bible translation by the Jewish Publication Society
Jub.	Jubilees
Kel.	Kelim
Kel. B. Bat.	Kelim Bava Batra
Ker.	Keritot
Ket.	Ketubbot
Kil.	Kilayim
LAB	<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>
Lam. R.	Lamentations Rabba
Leq. T.	Leqah Tov
Lev. R.	Leviticus Rabba
LXX	Septuagint
m.	Mishna (followed by name of tractate)
Mak.	Makkot
Meg.	Megilla
Mek.	Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael
Mek. SbY	Mekhilta de Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai
Men.	Menahot
MHG	Midrash HaGadol
Midr. Pss.	Midrash Psalms
Midr. Sam.	Midrash Samuel
Midr. Tan.	Midrash Tannaim
Miq.	Miqwaot
M. Qat.	Moed Qatan
M. Shen.	Maaser Sheni

MT	Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible)
Myst.	De Mysteriis
Naz.	Nazir
Ned.	Nedarim
Nid.	Nidda
Num. R.	Numbers Rabba
PalTg	Palestinian Targum
Pes.	Pesaḥim
Pesh	Peshitta
Pes. K.	Pesiqta de Rav Kahana
Pes. R.	Pesiqta Rabbati
Pit. Tor.	Pitron Tora
PRE	Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer
Qid.	Qiddushin
Qoh. R.	Qohelet Rabba
Quaest. in Gen.	Quaestiones in Genesin
R. Hash.	Rosh Hashana
SamTg	Samaritan Targum
San.	Sanhedrin
Sef. T.	Sefer Tora
Sek. T.	SekhelTov
Semaḥot	see Ev. Rab.
Shab.	Shabbat
Sheq.	Sheqalim
Shevi	Sheviit
Shevu.	Shevuot
Sifre Deut.	Sifre Deuteronomy
Sifre Num.	Sifre Numbers
Syb. Or.	Sybilline Oracles
Sof.	Soferim
Sot.	Sota
Soh.	Massekhet Sopherim
SOR	Seder Olam Rabba
Suk.	Sukka
t.	Tosefta (followed by name of tractate)
Taan.	Taanit
Tam.	Tamid
Tan.	Tanḥuma
TanB.	Tanḥuma Buber
T. d. Eliyy.	Tanna debe Eliyyahu
Tem.	Temura
Ter.	Terumot
TgCant	Targum Canticles
TgCG	Cairo Geniza Targum Fragments

TgChr 1	Targum 1 Chronicles
TgChr 2	Targum 2 Chronicles
TgEst-I	Targum Esther I (Targum Rishon)
TgEst-II	Targum Esther II (Targum Sheni)
TgJon	Targum Jonathan
TgLam	Targum Lamentations
TgNeof	Targum Neofiti
TgNeof ^m	marginalia in Targum Neofiti
TgOnq	Targum Onqelos
TgPsJ	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
TgPs, TgPss	Targum Psalm(s)
TgRuth	Targum Ruth
TgTos	Tosefta Targum
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
Tos.	Tosafot
Vit. Mos.	De vita Mosis
Vulg.	Vulgata
y.	Palestinian Talmud, or Yerushalmi (followed by name of tractate)
Yad.	Yadayim
Yalq. S.	Yalquṭ Shimoni
Yev.	Yevamot
Yom.	Yoma
Zev.	Zevahim

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AIU147	MS 147, Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris
Arx	2023, 2027 of the Chapter Archive of La Seu d'Urgell, Catalonia
Barco	Talmud Bavli, מסכת סנהדרין, Gershom ben Moses Soncino, 1497, Barco?
Baz	Fr. ebr. 21, Archivio Storico Comunale, Bazzano
Bol	Fr. ebr. 437, Archivio di Stato, Bologna
Cas4	J.I.4, Biblioteca Casanata, Rome
Ces	Cesena, Archivio della Curia Vescovile Fr. ebr. 7
CG1	T.-S NS 219.40 (Cambridge Genizah Collections)
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ColX	Columbia X893, Columbia College, New York
Ena 2075.2	Elkan N. Adler 2075.2, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York
Erfurt	Or. fol. 1220, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz
EscGI3	Escorial G-I-3
Flor	Plut. II.I, 7-9, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence

Fr. ebr. 14	Fr. ebr. 14, Archivio Storico Comunale di Bazzano
Gött	Hs 3, Niedersächsische Staats und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen
Guad	Talmud Bavli, מסכת יומא. מסכת קדושין, Guadalajara, ca. 1480
Günz	Günzburg 1134, Russian State Library, Moscow
H671	Hébreu 671, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
H1337	Hébreu 1337, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
Ham165	Cod. hebr. 165, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg
Ham169	Cod. hebr. 169, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg
Herzi	ms 1, Yad HaRav Herzog Institute.
Jer515	Heb. 8° 515, National Library, Jerusalem
Kaufman A50	Kaufman A50, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest
Krotoshin	Palestinian Talmud, Jerusalem: Shiloh, 1969, repr. Krotoshin edn. 1886.
Lon400	Harley 5508, British Library, London
Lon402	Add. 25.717, British Library, London
Lon445	Add. 27.296, British Library, London
Lon5558	Or. 5558 K 23-27, British Library, London
Mon88	Montefiore 88, London, formerly in Jews' College
Mun6	Munich 6, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
Mun95	Munich 95, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
Mun140	Munich 140, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
Ox3	Opp. add. fol. 3 (Neubauer 147), Bodleian Library, Oxford
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Parm3173	3173, Biblioteca Palatina, Parma (Cod. De Rossi 138)
Pes1510	edn Pesaro, Italy, 1510
Pes1511	edn Pesaro, Italy, 1511
Pes1515	edn Pesaro, Italy, 1515
Pes1516	edn Pesaro, Italy, 1516
Rab15	Rab. 15, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York
Rab108	Rab. 108, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York
Rab218	Rab. 218, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York
Rab1608	Rab. 1608, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York
Rab1623	Rab. 1623, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York
Reuz	Reuchlin 2, Badische Landesbibliothek, Karlsruhe.

Scal3	Or. 4720, Scaliger 3, State University of Leiden.
Son1483	Talmud Bavli, מסכת ברכות, Soncino 1483
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Son1489	Talmud Bavli, מסכת חולין, מסכת בבא קמא, מסכת נדה, מסכת שבת, קדושין, Soncino 1489 (separate editions)
Spet	Yevr. II A 293/1, RNL, St. Petersburg
Stut32	Orient 32, Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart
t2	Urbinate Ebr. 1 (MS Kennicott 228), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
t6	Hébreu 17, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
tror	First Rabbinic Bible, Bomberg, Venice, 1516–1517
trir	Second Rabbinic Bible, Bomberg, Venice, 1524–1525
tr2	Antwerp Polyglot (Biblia Regia), Antwerp, 1569–1572.
tr14	parm. 2867 (De-Rossi 345), Biblioteca Palatina, Parma
tr27	hébreu 40 (Sorbonne 36; Kennicott 218), Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
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Vat116	Cod. Vat. ebr. 116, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat118	Cod. Vat. ebr. 118, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat119	Cod. Vat. ebr. 119, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat120	Cod. Vat. ebr. 120, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat121	Cod. Vat. ebr. 121, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat122	Cod. Vat. ebr. 122, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat123	Cod. Vat. ebr. 123, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat125	Cod. Vat. ebr. 125, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat130	Cod. Vat. ebr. 130, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat133	Cod. Vat. ebr. 133, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat134	Cod. Vat. ebr. 134, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat140	Cod. Vat. ebr. 140, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat487	Cod. Vat. ebr. 487.8, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Ven	Babylonian Talmud, Venice 1519–1523
Ven1523	editio princeps Palestinian Talmud, Venice, 1522–1523
Ven1545	Genesis Rabba, Bomberg, Venice 1545
Vienna	MS Heb. 20 (Schwartz 46), Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.
Vilna	Babylonian Talmud, 20 vols., Jerusalem: Hatalmud, no date; repr. Vilna 1880–1886

Note on manuscripts and editions

An asterisk after the abbreviation of a manuscript indicates the first hand; a superscript ‘m’ a marginal, or interlinear, correction or alternative reading (e.g., Gött*, Gött^m).

For the Guadalajara and Soncino edns I followed A.K. Offenberg, *Hebrew Incunabula in Public Collections: A First International Census* (Bibliotheca Humanistica & Reformatorica, 47; Nieuwkoop: De Graaf Publishers, 1990). Where doubts remain concerning the date I have adopted his estimated date.

Vat32	Cod. Vat. ebr. 32, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat60	Cod. Vat. ebr. 60, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat108	Cod. Vat. ebr. 108, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat109	Cod. Vat. ebr. 109, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat110	Cod. Vat. ebr. 110, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat111	Cod. Vat. ebr. 111, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat113	Cod. Vat. ebr. 113, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat115	Cod. Vat. ebr. 115, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat116	Cod. Vat. ebr. 116, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat118	Cod. Vat. ebr. 118, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat119	Cod. Vat. ebr. 119, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat120	Cod. Vat. ebr. 120, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat121	Cod. Vat. ebr. 121, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat122	Cod. Vat. ebr. 122, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat123	Cod. Vat. ebr. 123, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat125	Cod. Vat. ebr. 125, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat130	Cod. Vat. ebr. 130, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat133	Cod. Vat. ebr. 133, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat134	Cod. Vat. ebr. 134, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
Vat140	Cod. Vat. ebr. 140, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
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Note on textual symbols

Wherever relevant, the following textual symbols are used in quotations of primary sources:

- [...] lacuna, faded, abraded or corrected text
- Ⲁ letter is partially legible or visible; probable reading
- Ⲭ text erased by the scribe or another hand
- Ⲙ interlinear or marginal reading
- Ⲛ interlinear or marginal addition by another hand
- Ⲕ scribal correction of the manuscript
- ⲔⲔ editorial correction of the reading in the textual witness

Note on transliterations

In this book I have adopted a simplified system of transliteration based on modern Hebrew pronunciation; Ⲁ and ⲙ have not been represented, while ⲑ = b, Ⲓ = v, ⲓ = ḥ (pronounced as the ‘ch’ in ‘Loch’), Ⲕ = t, ⲕ = k, Ⲍ = kh, ⲍ = p, Ⲏ = f, ⲏ = ṣ (pronounced as ‘ts’ in ‘lots’), Ⲑ = sh, ⲑ = s, Ⲓ = s, ⲓ = t.

Rabbinic names have been transliterated according to this system, such as Shmuel, Yaaqov, even when certain names are more commonly known by their standard English names, although the names of the biblical books and biblical protagonists have been referred to by their standard names, e.g. Samuel, Jacob, and so on. In quotations of other (secondary) sources, the original transliteration given in these sources has been preserved.

Introduction

Languages abounded in the Fertile Crescent of Late Antiquity at the time rabbinic Judaism slowly emerged as a mainstay of religious tradition. The Roman province of Judaea, later Palestine, found itself at the intersection of two *linguae francae*, Greek and Aramaic, with the religious tradition of its Jewish population mainly couched in Hebrew. These literary tongues went hand in hand with local vernaculars, the true variety of which will presumably always remain out of sight. The vicissitudes of Jewish life itself had long ensured that Jewish communities did not speak one language, but several and in different dialects to boot.

Since multilingualism and translation were old table fellows in the Ancient Near East and in Jewish society, it comes as no surprise that reflections on language and translation were widespread in Late Antiquity. Much has been written about the distinctive Jewish understanding of translation, and, in particular, about the contrast between the Jewish Hellenistic understanding of translation and the rather different rabbinic concept of translation, in which the Hebrew original categorically retained priority over its versions. Yet, despite widespread interest in multilingualism, language philosophy, the ancient scriptural translations and translation studies, no attempt has ever been made to correlate these topics for rabbinic Judaism in the first half of the first millennium CE, or to account for the whole complex of rabbinic views on language and translation against the backdrop of rabbinic culture at large. While the unique character of the Jewish Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Targums, has long been appreciated, and the controversial rejection of the Greek translation better known as the Septuagint has drawn renewed attention in recent decades, an integrative, analytic study of the rabbinic views on language and multilingualism, the 'holy tongue', script and language, the place of translation and the rabbinic quotations of scriptural translations remain a desideratum in the literature.

But a lack of integration and correlation is not the only reason for the present study. All too often, surveys and summaries that deal with the issues of language perception and scriptural translation throw all rabbinic views together, without an analysis of their development or review of their unity and without an examination of the rabbinic citations of

translation for their discursive value in context and for the implications for rabbinic thought on translation. The rabbinic theory of translation is usually represented as a stable system even in studies that otherwise describe and analyse relevant passages in the rabbinic sources with great sophistication. As a result, harmonized accounts that are oblivious of significant cross-cultural and diachronic differences in rabbinic views on language and translation abound in secondary literature.

This study of the perception, conceptualization and use of the holy language and foreign languages in a multilingual context starts from the belief that we particularly stand to learn from an integrated approach to the rabbinic views on language and translation about the ideals, pragmatism and development of the rabbinic movement when we do not assume a priori that all these reflections, statements and applications of translations in rabbinic discourse are coherent, but instead allow for dissonance, improvisation, variation and development. I think it necessary to expose the rabbinic perception and reception of language and translation as anything but straightforward, monolithic, unchallenged and self-evident. To achieve this goal, I seek to link the rabbinic perception, reception, use and conception of language and the multilingual world the sages inhabited to the rabbinic use for languages in general and for scriptural translations in particular.

Central to my thesis is the question how the perception and use of foreign languages relates to that of Hebrew, in the distinct contexts of legal debate and interpretation, legal and ritual proceedings, and scriptural translation. Behind this question looms the larger issue of whether the increasing insistence upon the use of Hebrew, and its prioritization as a religious, even ethnic, language, cannot be explained as a corollary of various factors, such as the rise of the rabbinic movement to power (language as empowering a social elite, which distributes its meaning through its learning and education), the growing distance to the language of the Tora, geographical differentiation, the need to view these issues within the framework of established traditions, and even forces towards differentiation from Christianity. From the nature of our evidence it is obvious from the word go that any attempt at answering all these questions will be circumstantial, but that does not diminish their importance. Moreover, I hope to demonstrate, at the very least, that the rabbinic attitudes toward language and translation, and the fluctuations of opinion, show a

gradual, non-linear and yet clearly discernible development in which the value of foreign languages recognized and emphasized in early traditions was subject to restriction and marginalization.

There are at least three reasons to question current models of language and translation theory within the pre-islamic rabbinic movement. Social theory tends to acknowledge the tentative nature of generalizations, allowing for individual, even communal, practices to have been far more varied, and the element of improvisation between given borderlines to have been much more notorious than official ideologies are willing to own up to. It is indeed not utterly hopeless to probe the official line and read it against the grain, and find another story in the traces it leaves of suppressed practices and reflections, provided that additional support is found for such interpretations of the evidence.

Moreover, in recent decades historians have gradually come to terms with the contrast between an archaeological repository which did not reflect rabbinic control over Jewish society in Palestine, let alone Jewish communities in the Diaspora, as well as a lack of non-rabbinic, contemporary evidence for Jewish life all over, and the rabbinic accounts of Jewish practices. While it has long been obvious that rabbinic homiletic and legal lore is prescriptive rather than descriptive, the limited extent of rabbinic influence of Jewish society, communities and individuals in the second century CE, extending into the third, has only recently found wider acceptance in scholarship of rabbinic Judaism. Abandoning the deceptive image of a society unified under rabbinic religious leadership for a variety of Judaisms existing side by side during the first centuries CE has given much greater nuance, if not relativity, to assessments of rabbinic influence on Palestinian society, let alone the Diaspora communities.

Finally, even at the surface of rabbinic literature it is not a homogeneous picture of language use in liturgical practices that confronts us. Even such basic distinctions as the differences of rabbinic opinions between Babylon and Palestine—ignoring intramural variations for the moment—has been given short shrift. That such differences shed light on both theory and practice is beyond question.

There is every reason to assume that the rabbinic movement had to come to terms with pre-existing conditions in the case of languages and translations in use in Jewish society. While the sages allocated and demarcated the use of scriptural translations in the synagogues of Late

Antiquity, they probably did not introduce translations into the liturgy. No single rabbinic source claims or implies that they did, and it is historically unlikely that they were responsible. The discussions of translations and references to interpreting do not question the absence of translation, but its presence. In Greek-speaking environments, translations were a given before the rabbis formulated their rulings. Most scholars, when they do not gloss over the subject, assume some sort of Greek and Hebrew co-existence in the early synagogue liturgy. The existence of a *dragoman*, or interpreter, in Alexandria is assumed by many, but probably is little more than a retrojection into Seleucid Alexandria of a situation which the Mishna envisages for second century CE Palestine.

Although this study probes the rabbinic reception of language and translation alongside the practice of translation in Late Antiquity, I do not pretend or intend to uncover a historical reality other than the historical values projected within rabbinic literature. Rabbinic reflection on the use of languages and translations in various situations requires an understanding of the historical context in which these deliberations, observations and regulations were formulated and passed on to later generations. But this context is elusive, and cannot easily be constructed for a variety of reasons. The selective nature of rabbinic literature argues against its use as a primary source for historiography in the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods. Still, notwithstanding the a-historical nature of much of the information we find in rabbinic literature, the social constructs and ideology are identifiable expressions of historical, and even material, realities, which, at least to some extent it is hoped, circumvents the nettled problem of the relation between text and conditions 'on the ground'. All the same, this will not be a theoretical study of the ideological forces behind the rabbinic views on language and translation. Most of this study is about the values rabbis placed on language and translation. Although it should be readily admitted that we know precious little about contemporary practices, while the evidence we have is slender and circumstantial in nature, to insist upon contextualization of the rabbinic evidence is to question the relationship between rabbinic reflection on the practice of Bible translation and the Jewish communities in which the Tora was communally read.

A final comment on a matter of convenience and conflict. Wherever I refer to the rabbis in general, such oblique references are the result of the way rabbinic literature presents itself. The anonymous voice is

paramount, and yet we cannot collapse the anonymous voice with the literature as a whole—which would have made at least one voice strong and recognizable—because the anonymous voice itself is not one but many, not of one place but many, and not of one period but many. It is thus problematic to speak of the anonymous editors as the authors of the Bavli. I will not needlessly complicate my analysis by attempting to differentiate the voices I cannot tell apart; however, references to the *stamma* or *stammaim* just mean the anonymous voice without any assumption about their date, unless stated otherwise.

Structure

This study consists of three parts and nine chapters. The opening chapter focuses on the philosophy of language as evident in rabbinic literature and reviews what rabbinic thought offers on the questions of the origin of speech and language and how these reflections impact the appreciation of foreign languages. Whereas the Hebrew Bible hardly thematizes the concept of language, with the exception of the story of the Tower of Babel, rabbinic literature, while still falling far short of any philosophical treatise on the subject, offers scattered reflections on the question of the primordial or Adamic language, the faculty of speech, and the unity of language in the aforementioned episode of Babel. Above all, it reflects on the language of God and of the Tora in ways that have immediate ramifications for the perception of foreign languages. It offers a succinct discussion of rabbinic views on the origin of language and the implicit concept of Hebrew as the common ancestor of all languages. The dual image of the holy tongue as a single language and seventy languages is a forceful expression of this concept. In many ways, this chapter foreshadows the themes that will come to the fore in the ensuing chapters.

The second chapter concentrates on the concept of the ‘holy tongue’ in rabbinic literature, with an emphasis on early rabbinic literature because of the surprisingly small range of topics that we find associated with this concept and, above all, because of a renewed insistence on the use of Hebrew. This insistence is matched in a negative sense by the lack of attention to socio-linguistic or historical reasons for the language use of rites and recitations, and in a positive sense by the predominant rabbinic interest in text-immanent reasons for halakhic decisions and traditions.

All this is not to deny the rabbinic sense for reality: pragmatism and adaptation are in evidence in the third chapter about language selection in a multilingual society. In this chapter I explore the way the multilingual environment impacted on the uses and functions of languages in Jewish society. This includes a discussion of the degree to which Hebrew may still have been commanded by the Jewish population of Roman Palestine, of the level of code-switching and the implications of literary code-switching, and of the social context of translation. Here, I will delineate rabbinic ideas for the function and use of Aramaic in particular.

The second part of this study takes the locus of translation as perspective, to begin with the terminology of translation, which offers its own unique insight into the practice of translation. This chapter is followed by one about the recitation of Scripture, with due attention to marginalized practices and, in particular, the use of Greek Scripture. The locus of translation takes centre stage again when the rabbinic rules for the exclusion of certain scriptural passages from public translation are scrutinized.

The reconceptualization of translation forms the topic of Chapter Six, 'Between Holy Writ and Oral Tora'. To understand the peculiar border position of translation between the written Scriptures and the oral tradition it is necessary to dwell on the oral culture in which rabbinic learning was rooted, its norms and perception. The orality of rabbinic culture has received much attention in recent years, while the stark contrast between orality and literacy has been played down in the most recent accounts. Nevertheless most studies tend to generalize or harmonize all the different expressions of rabbinic statements, values and practices in this regard, and much stands to be gained from a careful analysis of the possible development of the rabbinic tradition, as well as improvisations and variations of practice.

This development, or conceptual transition, is approached from another angle in Chapter Seven, 'Ashurit and Alphabet'. There is good reason to assume that two of the Mishna's rulings on writing scripture contradict each other with something having to give way. I address this issue in the shape of a reception history of the requirement to write Scripture in Ashurit—the square Jewish script—and of the mishna, which wavers between the accreditation of Scripture as written in any language or Scripture written in Greek, if translated it must be. Many questions about the Ashurit script and the distinction or connection between script and language will pass

review, because this chapter exposes important tendencies in the rabbinic debate about the value and role of scriptural translation.

The third part dwells on the use of translations and the perception of the translator. To establish whether the rabbis set great store, if any, by the translations at their disposal, or those made on the fly, Chapter Eight, 'Targum in Talmud' analyses the different formats of cited translations. One of the goals of the inquiry is to assess the impact of the cited translation on the debate and train of thought, wherever possible or relevant. At the same time an effort was made to increase the textcritical basis for this part of the investigation as far as the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli) is concerned, something which, all too often, goes ignored but frequently makes crucial contributions to our reading of the relevant passages. Unmarked translations are also included, even though they may not formally represent 'running translations', that is a complete translation of the source text, but often represent ad-hoc and partial translations or just lexical equivalents in another language. Even so, they shed light on how languages and translations were viewed and used. The discussion of Aquila's translations will focus on those elements which may add to previous treatments of the topic; hence retranslations into Greek or comparison with the Hexaplaric material will not be my main focus. Instead, I will concentrate on the structure of these citations and their significance for the debate. Citations of the Palestinian Targum(s), although not formally marked as such, will be treated together for the light they throw on the status of Aramaic scriptural translation among Palestinian rabbis. With all the translations cited, I will not pay extensive attention to their value as witnesses of a textual tradition, either in Babylon or in Palestine, or their translation strategies as characteristics of a translation as document. This chapter is all about the reception of targum, its perception and the use it is put to among the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis.

The final chapter, before the conclusion, shifts the spotlight to one famous interpreter, Aquila the Proselyte, and his reception in rabbinic literature. The goal of this chapter is decidedly not to verify any historical veracity these narratives may have had, or even the existence of the persona himself, but to reflect on the way the famous proselyte and translator has been put to use in the narrative interests of later generations, leading up to the use of his name in justification of the practice of translation.

Quotations and translations

To facilitate reading and verifying the translations and interpretations put forward here, the sources will be quoted at length; the arguments rest on the detail of close readings. Quotations follow the generally established critical editions. Those from the Babylonian Talmud follow the Vilna edition unless stated otherwise, with relevant variant readings acknowledged in footnotes. Without the benefit of a stemma, the choice of the base text is mainly pragmatic and does not indicate that I believe the witness to represent the oldest form of the text available. Likewise, the standard edition of the Talmud is quoted for ease of reference, but not because of an assumed higher textcritical value, although not necessarily denying that value either. The Palestinian Talmud, or *Yerushalmi*, is cited after the edition of the Leiden manuscript by Sussman. The Mishna is cited after MS Kaufman A50 unless stated otherwise. The Tosefta is cited after MS Erfurt as edited by Lieberman, or the edition by Zuckerman for the tractates Lieberman did not edit, unless I explicitly cite another manuscript. The text of the *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* is cited after the edition by Horovitz and Rabin, with the relevant page numbers, but the references to tractate and *parasha* follow the edition of Lauterbach.

Throughout the text, a distinction will be made between the Mishna as the literary document and a *mishna* as a single unit in that document; similarly, Midrash refers to a literary document while *midrash* refers to a unit within a rabbinic document; and Targum refers to a literary document while *targum* refers to a translation as an activity or without identifying it with any of the known translations.

Translations of the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic literature are loosely based on JPS, Neusner's translations and the Soncino translations, but, more frequently than not, they are freely adapted to express the point of view more clearly. In these translations, I never aim for literalism (however defined) but try to bring across the semantic thrust (however imperfect) as idiomatically as possible, without straying too far from the wording of the source texts. In these translations I do not put the direct speech of named rabbis between quotation marks, because it is often difficult to say where one voice ends and the other begins, and the important and characteristic impression of a seamless whole would be visually interrupted. Scriptural quotations, however, are always put between quotation marks, followed in round brackets by book, chapter and verse.

Part I

Multilingualism and the holy tongue

The family of languages

The Hebrew Bible takes language and the faculty of speech for granted, without ever dwelling on the origin of either. As perceived in rabbinic literature, however, there are arguably three key moments in the Hebrew Bible for the origin, character and development of language: the language of creation and primordial language; the dispersion of the nations by language divisions in the story of the Tower of Babel; and, finally, God's revelation in language, in speech and in the shape of the Tora. These three key motifs are interrelated in rabbinic reflection and ultimately bound together in the notion that languages are a family with Hebrew as its head, despite the fact that this notion is never articulated in classical rabbinic literature of the period under consideration.

1.1 Adamic language and etymology

The Hebrew Bible only thematizes language in its narrative of the Tower of Babel, but, evocative as Gen. 11 is, its speculation about the origin and variation of language leaves many questions unanswered about the origin of language, the faculty of speech, the identity of the primordial language, its development, and the language(s) spoken by the earliest generations. Even so, rabbinic exegetes found convenient handles in the Tora to explain the origin and distribution of the faculty of speech and the existence of many languages. Adam's very first recorded action was to use his faculty of speech to name and thereby classify the animals (Gen. 2.19), which extended the process of creation by imposing order on the world.¹ Targum Neofiti explains that Adam used the 'language of the Temple' or 'holy tongue' (בלשן בית קדשה).² Indeed, the name-etymologies seem to imply that Adamic language was Hebrew, the language in which God created and communicated with his creatures.³ Naturally, most Jewish exegetes

¹ See, e.g., M. Weitzman, 'Judaism', in R.E. Asher (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1994), IV, pp. 1827–31 (1830).

² For opinions that the term does not refer to the Temple language, see Ch. Two below.

³ For God's speech, see, e.g., Gen. 1.3; Ps. 33.6. For the etymologies, see Gen. 2.23; 3.20; 4.1 and midrashic interpretations such as Gen. R. 18.4; 31.8.

maintained that the original language had been Hebrew, despite the lack of explicit confirmation in the Hebrew Bible—but whether this language was an ideal tongue, to be distinguished from the language used by Hebrew speakers, is not entirely clear. The rabbinic understanding of the ‘holy tongue’ suggests a complex picture, in which the ‘holy tongue’ is not entirely identical with living Hebrew, and in certain narratives it acquires the status of a language above all others.⁴

Nor does the Tora express an opinion on the question of whether language is a divine gift or an acquired skill which humans gradually mastered and developed. Again, later exegetes came to the rescue. When God created Adam as a living creature (Gen. 2.7), Onqelos explains, He endowed him with the ‘breath of life’ which became his ‘spirit of speech’; or in TgNeof’s version, God turned him into ‘a living creature which speaks’. God not only invested Adam with the faculty of speech, but speech also equates to human life. TgPsJ adds to these ideas the notion of comprehension, while sharing with the other Targums the same basic view: ‘And the breath in Adam’s body became a speaking spirit to enlighten his eyes and to make his ears hear’.⁵ Speech and intelligence go hand in hand, as in Philo, who recounts that the far greater linguistic ability of the first human beings went together ‘with such eyes as enabled them to behold even those natures, and essences, and operations, which exist in heaven, as also ears by which they could comprehend every kind of voice and language’ (*Quaest. in Gen.* 1.32). The connection between speech, intelligence and humankind may have been widespread. Speech, sight and understanding are also linked in the tale of the human beings whom Prometheus takes under his wings, who see follies but do not comprehend speech or hear properly before the god bestows advanced skills on them.⁶

The boldness of these Aramaic renderings only becomes apparent when we consider that the Hebrew term for living being, נפש חיה, is

⁴See the various references to the seventy languages, which Pharaoh knew, and Joseph, who knew the holy tongue on top of the seventy. See Ch. Two below.

⁵TgOnq: נשם דחיי ויהוה אדם לנפש דחיי; TgNeof: נשמתא דחיי והוה אדם לרוח ממלא; TgPsJ: נשמתא דחיי והוה נשמתא בגופא דאדם לרוח ממלא לאנהרות עינין ולמצות עינין; ממלא אודנין.

⁶Prometheus Vincit 447-48 (βλέποντες ἔβλεπον μάτην, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον); see D.L. Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language and Civilization* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 121.

also, and even primarily, used for animals.⁷ TgOnq always renders נפש חיה with the literal equivalent חיתא נפשא except for this verse, dealing as it does with Adam.⁸ This differentiation between humans and animals reflects a well-established translation strategy in the Targums: wherever a single Hebrew lexeme may have two meanings deemed opposites, these translations tend to introduce a dichotomy. Usually, this strategy is applied 'to differentiate between the holy and the profane'.⁹ The most ubiquitous example concerns אלהים: since this word may denote either 'God' or 'gods', the Targums remove any ambiguity by differentiating between 'God', 'Lord' and 'idols'. The translations add precision in meaning and impose their own order upon the text. Even so, the targumic distinction between the human and non-human 'living creature' removes ambiguity but, in the case of Adam, it does much more: speech becomes the touchstone of humanity.

Like these Targums, Greek thinkers denied the faculty of speech to the animal world, considering it as the unique quality of human beings. Things had not always been like that, neither in Greek nor Jewish lore: the original Adamic language was a shared one; the motif of a shared, universal language occurs in many other cultures. In the golden age of Kronos, Greek philosophers maintained, men, animals and gods shared the faculty of speech and communicated with one another in a shared language. Even the Tora implies that animals and humans were on speaking terms in primordial times. In the Garden of Eden language flowed freely between God, the snake, Adam and Eve. The book of Jubilees, dated to the second century BCE, relates that all the animals 'had spoken one with another with one lip and with one tongue' before God closed their mouth by way of punishment for the fall of Adam and Eve (3.28). Josephus informs his readership that 'all the living creatures had one language' when the serpent went about his devious ways (Ant. 1.1.4 [41]). Philo recounts a tale in which the animals shared a common language with people until they requested immortality for themselves, for which they were punished by a

⁷Gen 1.20, 21, 24, 30; 2.7, 19; 9.10, 12, 15-16; Lev. 11.10, 46; Ezek. 47.9.

⁸So too TgNeof Gen. 2.7 and TgJon Ezek. 47.9. TgPsJ deviates from the pattern in Gen. 1.24 with ברייתא נפש.

⁹See P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1907 [=1927]), pp. 111-13; see also L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York and Baltimore: KTAV and The Baltimore Hebrew College, 1983), pp. 38-39; W.F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges* (OTS, 36; Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 319-21, 353.

prefiguration of the Babel episode, as their speech was fractured into many different dialects.¹⁰

In early rabbinic literature examples of speaking animals are rare. In Targum Sheni, Solomon understands the language of the animals but early rabbinic literature hardly refers to the language of the animals, let alone their mastery of Hebrew, with the exception of the serpent who had to speak Hebrew for Eve to understand.¹¹ But the rabbis shared the conviction that the human species occupied a position between the animal and divine realms. In the enumeration of b. Ḥag. 16a, men share with animals their ways of eating and drinking, reproduction, urination and defecation; with angels they share intelligence, an erect posture and the holy tongue.¹² These ideas were far from new as they already circulated in one form or another in the Second Temple period;¹³ but this talmudic version modifies the original distinction: language, featuring in the more common version of the midway position of humankind, is replaced by the holy tongue. Perhaps the holy tongue here is the ideal, Adamic language, but there may well be an element of self-promotion at work, for language often is the hallmark of a higher civilization. In Greek, other languages were routinely labelled 'barbarian', and they were sometimes deemed so incomprehensible that they resembled animal sounds rather than intelligible speech.¹⁴ Likewise, Jewish traditions speak of characteristic differences between gentiles and

¹⁰ Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 6-8. Elsewhere, in *Quaest. in Gen.* 1.32 he allows for a level of articulate speech among animals which is inferior to that of human beings, while in *Op. Mund.* 156 he relates the view that snakes could speak with a human voice. For the Babel-like tale, see Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas*, p. 31.

¹¹ TgEst-II 1.2 (edn Grossfeld, pp. 27, 31): ...ושמע מילי עופא. ואינון ידעין בממלליה. Contrast TanB. חקת 15 (edn Buber p. 56b); Pes. K. 4.3. G. Salzberger, *Die Salomosage in der semitischen Literatur: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Sagenkunde* (Berlin-Nikolassee: Max Harrwitz, 1907), pp. 70-91; L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-1938), v, p. 94, vi, pp. 287-89.

¹² See also ARN A 37; cf. Mek. SbY וארא 6.

¹³ C.T.R. Hayward, 'Food, the Animals, and Human Dignity. Jewish Perceptions in a Targumic Context', in C.T.R. Hayward, *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism and Christianity* (SAIS, 10; Leiden: Brill), pp. 361-76. Hayward points to several developments in the distinction drawn between human beings and animals.

¹⁴ Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas*, p. 2; I. Sluiter, 'The Greek Tradition', in W.J. van Bakkum, J. Houben, I. Sluiter and C. Versteegh (eds.), *The Emergence of Semantics in Four Linguistic Traditions: Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic* (Studies in the History of the Language Sciences, 82; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), pp. 147-224 (213).

Jews, including the nakedness of the former. In the encounters between Pharaoh and Joseph, both able to command seventy languages, Joseph still outwits his opposite by his ability in the holy tongue. Hence the attribute of the 'holy tongue' sets Jews apart from non-Jews.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the modification is probably of a secondary nature, since *Genesis Rabba* (which lists four similarities and four dissimilarities rather than three each) sees the correspondence between human beings and angels simply in the fact that both can speak (ומדבר כמלאכי השרת) and does not mention the holy tongue.¹⁶ In the rabbinic mind, speech was understood to be a divine gift, unique to human beings, God and angels. The faculty of speech was considered to be one of the endowments of any human being at birth: 'the Holy One, blessed be He, gives him the spirit and the breath, beauty of features, eyesight, hearing, the faculty of speech, the ability to walk, understanding and discernment'.¹⁷

The postulate of an original, primal language was not shared by all thinkers. Greek philosophers had two different concepts of language, one conceived of as a conventional system, and another as inherent to the world (although these systems could sometimes be reconciled).¹⁸ The first concept accords language an important function in the progressive development of humankind, whereas the latter usually implies that the divinely provided linguistic conditions of the golden age deteriorated over the course of time. In the rabbinic tradition, notions of language emerging as a conventional system do not occur. While the famous dictum of R. Ishmael that 'the Tora speaks like the language of humankind' (lit. 'the children of Adam'; דברה תורה כלשון בני אדם), or the variant 'The Tora speaks in the way of the land' (דרך ארץ דברה תורה), does suggest human touches in the language of the Tora, it does not imply that language was contrived in a conventional manner, only that its use of language

¹⁵Pes. K. 4.3; TanB. חקת 13; Tan. חקת 6; Num. R. 19.3; Qoh. R. 7.33. According to b. Sot. 36b, Gabriel taught him these languages, but only after adding the ה to his name he was able to retain his knowledge. Cf. Gen. R. 93.10; Lev. R. 32.5; Leq. T. Gen. 41.40; 50.5.

¹⁶Gen. R. 8.11; 14.3.

¹⁷b. Nid. 31a. Literally, 'speaking of the lips' (ודיבור שפתיים), so VatiII, VatiI3 and Mun95; SonI489 and Vilna read פה דבור).

¹⁸M. Krauss, *Name und Sache: Ein problem in frühgriechischen Denken* (Studien zur Antiken Philosophie, 14; Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner, 1987), p. 3; M. Rubin, 'The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity', *JJS* 49 (1998), pp. 306–33; Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas*, p. 18.

does not warrant exegetical conclusions.¹⁹ The very wording 'like human language' (כלשון בני אדם) implies the divine origin of the language of the Tora. It is true that explicit contemporary accounts of a rabbinic language philosophy have not come down to us. Unlike Philo, the rabbis who contributed to classical rabbinic literature were rarely interested in systematic expositions of a philosophical nature. But that is not to suggest that they did not take any interest at all. Implicitly, all indicators point to the assumption that all languages stem from a common ancestor.

The idea that all languages share an ancestral tongue that broke down and corrupted into many languages has informed the use of etymologies from Homer to the present day.²⁰ The term etymology (ἔτυμος λόγος), 'a true word', apparently coined by the stoic philosopher Chrysippus (third century BCE) but as a methodological pursuit practised long before him,²¹ reflects the belief that the original form of a word reveals its true meaning.²² Naturally, etymologies were employed from within the language in which any given text was transmitted, hence Greek authors used Greek etymologies while Jewish authors used Hebrew ones, but occasionally they called upon foreign lexemes. Plato's *Cratylus* contains etymologies from 'barbarian' languages (suggesting that Greek was not deemed the oldest language of the world),²³ Philon (fourth century BCE) and Plutarch (ca. 46-120 CE) explain Eastern words by reference to Greek ones.²⁴ Likewise, Jewish authors sometimes resorted to Greek or Aramaic to bring

¹⁹Sifre Num. 112 (edn Horovitz, p. 121); Sifra קדושים 5; קדושים 4; Sifre Deut. 4 (edn Venice; edn Finkelstein: תורה ארץ דברה תורה); b. Ber. 31b; b. Yev. 71a; b. Ket. 67b; b. Ned. 3a (3x); 3b; b. Git. 41b; b. Qid. 17b; b. B. Meṣ. 31b (2x); 94b (2x); b. San. 56a; 64b; 85b; 90b (2x); b. Mak. 12a (3x); b. A. Zar. 27a; b. Zev. 108b (3x); b. Ker. 11a (4x); b. Nid. 32b; 44a. See W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* (repr.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965), I, p. 98; A. Samely, 'Scripture's Implicature: The Midrashic Assumptions of Relevance and Consistency', *JSS* 37 (1992), pp. 167-205 (198); A. Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 17-19.

²⁰E. Coseriu, *Die Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie von der Antike bis zum Gegenwart* (2nd edn, Stuttgart: UTB, 1975); M. Krauss, *Name und Sache*.

²¹Sluiter, 'Greek Tradition', pp. 158-59.

²²Gera, *Ancient Greek ideas*, pp. 25-26.

²³T. Harrison, 'Herodotus' Conception of Foreign Languages', *Histos* 2 (1998), available at: http://www.dur.ac.uk/Classics/histos/1998/harrison.html#n*; Gera, *Ancient Greek ideas*, pp. 24; 109 n. 118; 169 n. 196.

²⁴Y. Fränkel, *דרכי האגדה והמדרש* (Jerusalem: Masada, 1991), pp. 115-18.

out the meaning of a Hebrew word. Even if they may not have known any Hebrew, as seems likely in the case of Philo, etymologies had become a standard tool for any interpreter.²⁵ That some etymologies appear to bring out a meaning which had already been established does not diminish the importance of their use as 'part of the general intellectual paradigm, a legitimate way to underpin an argument, or to illustrate a point'.²⁶ Already in the Hebrew Bible we find an etymology of 'Babel' which reads this Babylonian word as if it were Hebrew, 'confusion'.²⁷ It is therefore neither surprising nor inconsequential that rabbinic literature espouses the belief that the semantics of Hebrew words can be illuminated by reading them as foreign words on the assumption that a phonetic resemblance, seen as a shared etymology, implies a semantic relationship between Hebrew and foreign lexemes.

The use of etymologies, including those that draw on foreign languages, is evident in the Septuagint, which occasionally betrays the use of Greek and Aramaic etymologies to interpret the Hebrew, as do Aquila and the Palestinian Targums. The following example may serve as an illustration of how this works across various texts. When Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb is that his father will bring as sacrifice, Abraham answers in TgNeof Gen. 22.8 that he himself may become the sacrifice, based on Greek (my emphases):

MT אלהים יראה לו השא לעלה בני
God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son

TgNeof²⁸ מן קדם ייי אודמן לה אמר לעלתא ואן לא את הוא אמרא דעלתא
A lamb has been prepared before the LORD for a burnt offering. But if not, you are the lamb of the burnt offering

Gen. R. 56.4 מכל מקום אלהים יראה לו השא וגוי' ואם לאו שא לעולה בני

²⁵L. Grabbe, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: the Hebrew Names in Philo* (Brown Judaic Series, 115; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); D.T. Runia, 'Etymology as an Allegorical Technique in Philo of Alexandria', *The Studia Philonica Annual* 16 (2004), pp. 101–21. Contrast T. Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 149–50 (with further references).

²⁶Sluiter, 'Greek Tradition', pp. 159–60.

²⁷The etymology does not reflect the Babylonian meaning, as the name is derived from *bab-ili*, 'the gate of the gods'.

²⁸FragTg^V ואמר אברהם מימריה דה' יודמן לי אימרא ואין לא את הוא אימרא לעלתא ברי

At all events, 'God will see to the sheep' and so on, but if not, you ('se') will be the burnt offering, my son

This translation is based on the Hebrew word שֶׁה 'lamb', read as a transliteration into Greek σε 'you', as Pesiqta Rabbati states explicitly,²⁹ hence translated by את. As a result, Abraham explicitly told his son that he might end up on the altar, in contrast to the Hebrew text in which Isaac is left in the dark about what will happen. That Isaac was by implication fully willing to give up his life is an apparent response to Christian theology concerning Christ's self-sacrifice.³⁰ The examples of etymology as an interpretative strategy in the Targums are not numerous, hence they probably reflect the use of common exegetical traditions.³¹

In rabbinic literature there is no specific terminology to introduce such decipherments of meaning via another language other than the use of לשון, which is often lacking and may be late in this connection. A few examples will suffice. Lev. 20.14 stipulates that a man should not sleep with both his wife and his mother-in-law. Whenever this law is violated, the man, his wife and his mother-in-law are to be punished by fire: באש ישרפו 'both he and they shall be put to the fire'. Yet the punishment raised understandable questions, since the man's wife appears innocent of any wrong-doing; only her husband and her mother are culpable of sexual violations. Ingeniously, R. Ishmael reads אתהון 'them' as את הן 'one [of them]', in which הן stands for ἑνα 'one'. The penalty thus applies to one of the women, obviously the mother-in-law, whereby his wife escapes the death-penalty.³² Similarly, when Isa. 41.24 exclaims 'Why (הן), you are less

²⁹ Pes. R. 40.34 הוא הקרבן יונת את הוא העולה איסי לעלה לשון יונת את הוא הקרבן (so the Dropsie MS; edn Ulmer). Cf. TanB. וירא 23.

³⁰ E. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 116–17.

³¹ Another example is the translation of אלון בכות 'the Oak of Weeping' (Gen. 35.8) by אחרון בכות 'another weeping' in TgPsJ, which reflects a reading of אלון as the Greek word ἄλλον 'another'. This tradition is also found in Gen. R. 81.5; Pes. K. 3.1; Qoh. R. 7.7; Tan. כי תצא 4; TanB. וישלח 26; MHG Gen. 81.8. See Fränkel, האגדה, pp. 116–17; S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Life and Manners of Jewish Palestine in the 11–14 Centuries C.E.* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942).

³² b. San. 76b. Note that ἑνα is not the feminine singular! See further Yev. 94b; y. San. 7.1, 24b; y. Yev. 10.6, 11a; 11.1, 11d. The Targums, in passing, do not amend the punishment; TgPsJ only adds the method of burning by molten lead (cf. m. San. 7.2). The word אתהון is

than nothing', R. Berahya reportedly read הן as ἕνα 'one': 'For me you are the one'.³³

It should be stressed that the sources are not restricted to biblical lexemes. Discussing whether prematurely born babies are viable, R. Abbahu proves that a seven-month old foetus will live while an eight-month old will die from the similarity between the names of Greek letters and Greek words: 'zeta seven eta eight', the Greek letter ζ, which has the numerical value of seven while its pronunciation resembles ζήτω 'live', and from the letter η with the numerical value of eight, which phonetically resembles ἔτω 'go' (in the sense of 'depart from life').³⁴ The mere fact that value and phonetics may be linked is enough to establish an intrinsic truth. In the Dreambook, the word קפודקייא in a dream told to R. Yose b. Ḥalafta (in the Bavli, R. Ishmael) is interpreted as two distinct words, one Aramaic, another Greek: קופא and δέκα. The combination of two languages signifies a corruption, as Alexander pointed out,³⁵ for the parallel in Palestinian rabbinic sources suggests two Greek words, κάππα and δόκια.³⁶ The word is treated as a cypher waiting to be decoded, its 'true' components—that is, its etymology—provide the key to its full meaning.

Nor are the etymologies restricted to Greek and Aramaic. In b. San. 4b the number of compartments of the head-tefillin—the phylacteries, or prayer-box—is discussed. How can the requirement of four compartments be related to the Tora? R. Aqiva derives the requirement from a play on the noun טטפת: ט' "tot" means two in Gadpe,³⁷ פת "pat" means two in

more usual than אתן but the 'neutral' form אתם (masculine, but also used of women) is more common.

³³ Pes. K. 9.6; cf. 24.6.

³⁴ See Gen. R. 14.2 (edn Theodor-Albeck p. 127, with comments); 20.2; Tan. במדבר 21.

³⁵ P.S. Alexander, 'Bavli Berakhot 55a–57a: the Talmudic Dreambook in Context', JJS 46 (1995), pp. 230–48 (240–41). Note, however, that mixed language 'etymologies' do occur, for example in Gen. R. 84.8 where זקנים (Gen. 37.3) is explained as זיי איקונין.

³⁶ b. Ber. 56b; Lam. R. 1.1, 17 (edn Buber, p. 54); y. M. Shen. 4.12, 55b; Gen. R. 68.12. See also P. Mandel, 'Between Byzantium and Islam: The Transmission of a Jewish Book in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods', in Y. Elman and I. Gershoni (eds.), *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 74–106.

³⁷ Although כתפי is sometimes understood as 'Coptic', i.e. כפתי, the manuscripts are unanimous in the reading without metathesis: so Flor, Mun95, Herz1 and Barco, while the reading without metathesis is more likely on the basis of a phonetic variant in one MS and several editions of the Arukh: גדפי (Kohut, iv, p. 23). In the parallel passage of b. Zeb. 37b

African'. The identification of these places has remained elusive, but does not concern us here. Even if this whole tradition is made up and never was R. Aqiva's teaching—there may be deliberate irony at work here, since most examples of etymologies appear to have been coined in an early period, in Palestine—its inclusion as one of many such etymologies proves that the procedure as such was well-known. Aqiva reportedly reads the Hebrew words as two words in two distinct languages, in which they have a value that sheds light on the halakhic requirement of the head-*tefillin*. Elsewhere we find etymologies based on Arabic.³⁸

Rabbinic willingness to utilize foreign etymology implies a view of languages as one family with roots that hark back to an original, ancestral tongue. That this latter language was Hebrew is perhaps most forcefully expressed in those voices that satirize the authenticity of foreign tongues and emphasize that foreign languages are not on a par with Hebrew. Pointing to the (alleged) etymological connection between *אשה* and *איש* in Hebrew, they make a mockery of Greek and Aramaic by creating feminine noun formations for 'man', and masculine ones for 'woman', forms which do not exist in these languages. The etymological connection in Hebrew thus proves the higher truth of Hebrew.³⁹ These aggadic traditions bolster the view of Hebrew as the holy tongue and a language which embeds a deeper meaning of the world than any other.

There are occasional dissonant voices. The idea that all generations spoke Hebrew is challenged in an obscure talmudic passage, in which Rav Yehuda claims in Rav's name that Adam the First spoke Aramaic—a view almost as heretical as the idea in the same passage that Adam the First was himself a heretic (b. San. 38b). The Talmud relates the idea that Adam the First spoke Aramaic to m. San. 4.5, which states that God minted human beings with a single seal—namely, with Adam the First—yet no one human being is exactly like another. As one of four reasons why Adam was created single, this tradition—that he had the role of a single seal producing a diverse humanity—stands as a testimony to God's unicity and

ColX supports this latter reading: טוט בגדפי שתים פות באפריקי שתים. The usual reading is attested in Mun95, Parm147, Vat118, Vat121, Ven and Vilna. However, the reading גרפי occurs in MSS Vat118 and Vat121 (b. Men. 34b, another parallel), and in Vat118 with a scribal error: בגרפי. Mun95 supports Ven and Vilna. In either case Coptic can be ruled out.

³⁸Gen. R. 87.1.

³⁹Gen. R. 31.8; 18.4.

greatness, as only He can produce such pluriformity in his own image. The *gemara* transfers this notion to language. It relates the contrast between creation in the likeness of the single God, and the resulting plurality of unique beings, to the contrast between the single holy tongue with which God created Adam the First, and the many different languages spoken by humanity. The plurality of languages mirrors the plurality of people—evident in the expression ‘nations, peoples and tongues’—over and against the singular origin of both language and mankind, but ultimately the plurality reflects God’s unicity. Adam’s language, then, actually affirms the unicity and richness of the divine language and does not detract from Hebrew’s position.

Since the Hebrew Bible locates the origin of language and the faculty of speech in God’s creation, an understanding more pronounced in the rabbinic interpretation of creation, language is a divine gift, spoken by all and sundry in the Garden of Eden. In many aggadic traditions the holy tongue is both the language of creation and the primordial language spoken by the generations before Babel’s proliferation of tongues.⁴⁰ As the language of creation, mystical speculation would carry the notion much further and invest not just the Hebrew language but its consonants and graphemes with creative power and significance. An early antecedent is found in the shape of the unique work *Sefer Yešira*, the ‘Book of Creation’, which combines two traditions about the foundation of the world: the ten *sefirot* or basic principles of creation and the twenty-two letters of the alphabet sustaining that creation.⁴¹ Once thought to be of Geonic origin, it has been dated to the Amoraic period in recent decades, despite the difficulty comparing it with anything else in this period; following Gruenwald,⁴² it ‘occupies a kind of spiritual isolation that is positively unique in the history of Hebrew literature’. Closest comes one passage in the *Bavli*, which expresses the view that the tent of the covenant in

⁴⁰Hebr. T. Naph. 8.4-5; y. Meg. 1.11(8),71b; TgNeof/TgPsJ Gen. 11.1; Midr. Tan. 19 (TanB. 19 28); Yannai 9.5 (edn Rabinowicz, p. 112). For T. Naph., see H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), Appendix I, p. 449.

⁴¹P. Hayman, *Sefer Yešira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). See J. Dan, ‘Sprache/Sprachwissenschaft/Sprachphilosophie’, TRE 31 (2000), pp. 760–65 with further references.

⁴²I. Gruenwald, ‘Some Critical Notes on the First Part of *Sefer Yezira*’, REJ 132 (1973), pp. 475–512 (477).

the desert was representative of the structure of the universe, because Bešalel—responsible for building the tabernacle—‘knew how to combine the letters by which heaven and earth were created’ (b. Ber. 55a). This passage appears to share the view that the laws of the language are identical to the cosmological principles. In the Amoraic period, however, restraint governed speculation about the creation,⁴³ and this line of thought only appears to resonate more fully in the rabbinic world during the Geonic period and beyond.

1.2 The linguistic unity lost in Babel

Many of the world’s myths share the view that an original tongue fragmented into many,⁴⁴ but the biblical version is decidedly ambiguous. If the Table of Nations in Gen. 10 suggests a shared ancestral language spoken by all until its descendant languages diverged, the subsequent narrative about the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11.1–9) retroactively explains the proliferation of numerous distinct languages as a disaster which humankind brought upon itself. Only the hubris of Babel’s ziggurat resulted in God’s decision to check human ambitions by breaking the unity of speech and thereby scatter people around the earth.

But Gen. 10–11 remains ambivalent about the relationship between the Noahite language(s), Hebrew, and the languages spoken after Babel, or the relation between any of these languages and the primordial tongue. There is a marked tension between the Table of Nations and the story of Babel. In the Table of Nations the Tora describes how all people descended from Noah after the flood, ‘branched out’ (10.5, 32) and ‘spread out’ (10.18), each people with its own language (ללשונם, 10.5, 20, 31). This description of how the earth was divided into peoples and languages precedes the narrative of the confusion with which God thwarted the plans of Babel (Gen. 11). Yet according to Gen. 11.1, everyone had ‘one language [lit. ‘one lip’] and unique words’ (שפה אחת ודברים אחדים). When God sees what they are up to, He observes that they are ‘as one nation with a single tongue’ (11.6, אחת ושפה אחת). By confounding their speech and understanding

⁴³P.S. Alexander, ‘Pre-Emptive Exegesis: Genesis Rabba’s Reading of the Story of Creation’, *JJS* 43 (1992), pp. 230–45.

⁴⁴A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957–1963).

God scatters them all over the earth (11.7-9). These descriptions of a people speaking with 'one lip', who are living together in a valley (11.2) before God scatters them about, stand in marked contrast to Gen. 10's plurality of 'tongues' already dispersed all over the earth.

As a result, Jewish interpreters in Antiquity did not hold uniform views on the identity of the Noahite language(s) spoken before the great confusion of Gen. 11. They resolved this difficulty in different ways, always harmonizing one chapter with the other and glossing over certain aspects. Some omitted the existence of multiple languages in their account of Gen. 10 and resolved the discrepancy of location in both accounts; others, in similar vein, omitted the single language of Gen. 11. Yet others read Gen. 10 as an account of the dispersion God brought about by confusing the speech of the Noahites, inverting the chronological order of the two chapters. And finally, some understood Gen. 11's unity of language as a harmony of intentions and peaceful relations rather than a single language.

Josephus took the first course of action. In his retelling of the Bible, he reorders the succession of events by locating the Noahites in the valley of Shinar at the start, before the dispersion (Ant. 1.4.1 [1.110]). Although the Noahites send out colonies before Nimrod urges them to construct a tower, Josephus omits any prior manifestation of a multiplicity of languages from this account and presents its emergence as a direct result of God's intervention at Babel, confounding 'that language which they readily understood before' (1.4.3 [117-18]). In addition, the more prominent role he accords Nimrod links and harmonizes Gen. 10 and 11.⁴⁵ Only slightly different is the harmonization in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB). Like Josephus, the author of LAB suppresses the reference to many languages before the confusion, but he resolves the tension of dispersion versus living together in a valley in a different way: he precedes the story of Gen. 11 with the clarification that the Noahites 'who had been separated while inhabiting the earth afterwards gathered and dwelled together'.⁴⁶

More common is the approach which takes Gen. 10 as the outcome of God's intervention in Gen. 11. A good example is found in the Hebrew Testament of Naphtali, which relates that seventy angels divided the

⁴⁵S. Inowlocki, 'Josephus' Rewriting of the Babel Narrative (Gen 11:1-9)', JSJ 37 (2006), pp. 169-91 (172).

⁴⁶H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation* (AGJU, 31; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 97, 236.

seventy languages of the world in the generation of Peleg. Peleg, in whose days 'the earth was divided' (Gen. 10.25), thus becomes the link between Gen. 10 and 11, which allows the dispersion of Gen. 10 to be read as the linguistic confusion of Gen. 11. The number seventy, while of symbolic value, may reflect the tentative number of the Noahites according to the Table of Nations, thus forging another link between chapters ten and eleven. Hebrew, however, 'remained only in the house of Shem and Eber, and in the house of Abraham our father, who is one of their descendants'.⁴⁷ This is not the case in the Book of Jubilees, where Hebrew disappeared from the world 'from the day of the collapse', that is the confusion after Babel, so that Abram has to be taught Hebrew from scratch by an angel (12.25-27).⁴⁸ Hebrew is the 'revealed language' and the 'language of creation', but, after the fall of Adam and Eve, first the animals lose the ability to speak this language (3.28), and, after Babel, all human beings lose the ability too. Otherwise, Jubilees integrates the dispersion into its narration of Gen. 11, but fails to mention the single language of Gen. 11.1. Instead, it refers to 'languages' and thus resolves the biblical tension in the opposite way from most (but not all) other sources.

The Targums do not explicitly reconcile Gen. 10 and 11. They have no scruples in translating both 'tongue' and 'lip' as 'tongue' and leaving the discrepancies of location and languages for what they are.⁴⁹ The division of *parashot*, weekly synagogue portions, between Gen. 10 and 11 may have made the discrepancies less obvious, but elsewhere boundaries of synagogue readings do not appear to have prevented attempts at harmo-

⁴⁷Hollander and Jonge, *Testaments*, p. 449.

⁴⁸Jub. 12.25-27. D.H. Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', in J. Neusner (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: New Series*, XVI (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 49-107 (73) understands the collapse in terms of the Fall of Adam and Eve, but missed the crucial fact that the term occurs in the Babel episode of Jubilees (10.26). See J.C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees* (CSCO, 511; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), p. 73; Van Ruiten argues that Jubilees would be inconsistent if Jub. 12.25's collapse refers to 10.26, i.e. Babel's period rather than Adam and Eve's, because Jub. 10.19-26 presupposes a plurality of languages; J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Primaevial History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1-11 in the Book of Jubilees* (JSJSup, 66; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 348-49. However, Hebrew could easily have been one of these languages. That would also remove Aaron's difficulty that Abraham had ancient Hebrew books available to him, which would be incomprehensible if no one since Adam and Eve had been able to speak Hebrew.

⁴⁹The omission of 'languages' in TgPsJ Gen. 10.31 is not a harmonization, since TgPsJ does not omit them in 10.5 and 20.

nization. Perhaps the Targums simply assume that Gen. 10 and 11 describe the same period, with Gen. 11 explaining how the earth came to be divided into many lands and tongues as told by Gen. 10. There are indeed some indications that these chapters were considered to be of one piece. In rabbinic literature, Nimrod is frequently associated with the Tower of Babel,⁵⁰ so it comes as no surprise that the Targums embellish the role of Nimrod in Gen. 10 by various degrees, which strengthens the link between the two chapters. For Nimrod's territory was the land of Shinar (10.10),⁵¹ the shared location of all people in Gen. 11.1. His name suggests rebellion (מרד), which triggers the introduction of the motif of sin in Gen. 10 in TgNeof and TgPsJ respectively: Nimrod was 'heroic in sin' (גיבר בחטאה) and began 'to revolt (ולמרדא) before the LORD'.⁵² Such emphasis also helps explain where things went wrong, for rabbinic exegesis comments on the lack of an explicit accusation in Genesis: 'the deeds of the generation of the Flood are articulated, whereas those of the generation of Division are not articulated' (Gen. R. 38.6). TgPsJ Gen. 11.7-8 supplements the narrative with a reference to the seventy angels, 'corresponding to the seventy nations, and each held the language of his nation and the script of its writing in his hand'. Hebrew T. Naph. relates this motif to the generation of Peleg, and so does TgPsJ—albeit not in Gen. 11 but in Deut. 32.8: 'He divided scripts and languages among human beings in the generation of the Division (בדרא דפלגותא), in which time he cast lots with the seventy angels'.⁵³ The synchrony of Gen. 10 and 11 is implied, but not pronounced.

Only one targumic tradition, FragTg^N, harmonizes Gen. 10 and 11 by a subtle addition of מן בבל in Gen. 10.18: 'From Babel onwards the

⁵⁰ See, e.g., P.S. Alexander, *The Toponymy of the Targumim with Special Reference to the Table of the Nations and the Boundaries of the Land of Israel* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1974), p. 80; P.W. van der Horst, 'Nimrod in Early Jewish Haggadah', in A. Kuyt, E.G.L. Schrijver and N.A. van Uchelen (eds.), *Variety of Forms: Dutch Studies in Midrash* (University of Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 59–75.

⁵¹ Identified as Babel in TgOnq, TgNeof and FragTg. For TgPsJ's unusual equation with Pontus, see Alexander, *Toponymy*, pp. 141–42.

⁵² Cf TgNeof^m and FragTg Gen. 10.8–9. For Nimrod, see Van der Horst, 'Nimrod', pp. 59–75. Note that TgPsJ also contains positive references to Nimrod, as noted by E. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of the Bible: Contents and Context* (BZAW, 174; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), p. 35.

⁵³ J. Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 185; A. Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), I, pp. 120–21.

Gen. 10 and 11, since, as we have seen, this position holds the dispersion and languages of Gen. 10 for the outcome of Gen. 11.1-9: the unitary language precedes the fragmentation of language even though the chapters are in reverse order. But how to make sense of Gen. 11.1 according to the view that the whole earth spoke seventy languages? Uniquely, on this interpretation the single language of Gen. 11.1 is tantamount to the seventy languages of the Noahites.

The question is how. To some extent this view of mutual understanding could reflect the interpretation of 'one speech' (שפה אחת) as a unity of heart and counsel, an agreeable situation of harmony, just as in modern English 'speaking the same language' means that people get along well, have similar beliefs and find themselves on the same wavelength. The motif of harmony and peaceful cooperation occurs in Jubilees and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, but goes together with the holy tongue as the single language in those sources, not with *all* the languages of the world.⁵⁷ It is true that the singularity of language could be understood in a metaphorical sense, but a genuine harmonization with Gen. 10 requires at least one additional step, namely to explain how people speaking seventy different languages could easily communicate with each other. It is one thing to speak the same language metaphorically when also speaking the same language literally, but quite another when different languages are involved.

If the first view—either that of R. Eleazar or of R. Yoḥanan—were to mean that *each* of them spoke all the seventy languages, so that they would have experienced no obvious difficulty understanding each other, the wording should have included 'each' or 'all' (for example, שהיו מדברים, איש בשבעי לשון), but since the text does not state this, they somehow spoke different languages and yet understood each other. Two (late) commentaries to the Yerushalmi ingeniously offer a textual explanation, which relates their mutual understanding to the second part of the phrase שפה אחת—*וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים*—not the unitary language but the unique words facilitated understanding.⁵⁸ Even so, this view clearly means that the one language they meant and understood is commensurate with the seventy languages of the world which they actually spoke.

The stakes are high, for let us not forget that the talmudic context of this passage is the interpretation of m. Meg. 1.8, which raises the question

⁵⁷ Jub. 10.22; FragTg^{VN}, TgPsJ Gen. 11.1; Gen. R. 38.6; PRE 24.

⁵⁸ קרבן העדה and פני משה in the Vilna edn ad loc.

whether the Scriptures may be written ‘in any language’, as sages held, or only in Hebrew and Greek, as Rabban Shimon b. Gamaliel ruled. The Yerushalmi itself may not provide a gloss on the meaning or significance of either claim about Gen. 11.1, but the halakhic setting of this discussion, and its continuation, certainly points to the talmudic understanding of the conversation between R. Yoḥanan and R. Eleazar: the relevance of the single language spoken by the Noahites is found in the practice of scriptural translations. While the notion of Hebrew as the primordial tongue is accommodated in both views, they put a different value on the use of other languages. If the unity of the world, and their shared language, is tantamount to the seventy languages of the world, this would surely boost the reputation and, more importantly, the legitimacy, of Tora translations: the one language finds full semantic expression in the seventy.

In truth, both views may not have been mutually exclusive but two sides of the same coin: a dual image of unicity (holy tongue) and pluriformity (seventy languages). Yet the halakhic context sets these views against one another, as the holy tongue that degenerated into seventy languages versus the seventy languages which together expressed the holy tongue. This discussion has become one about the translatability of the Tora and the legitimacy and value of scriptural translation—whether or not R. Eleazar and R. Yoḥanan ever discussed m. Meg. 1.8 on these terms. That is where the teaching of Bar Qappara comes in, who relates Yaphet to his offspring, Yavan (Gen. 10.2), traditionally identified as Greece. From the verse ‘God enlarge Yaphet, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem’ (Gen. 9.27),⁵⁹ he infers that Greek may be spoken in the tents of Shem—either Jewish society, or the synagogue, and within the present halakhic co-text of m. Meg. 1.8 presumably the latter.⁶⁰ Significantly, his opinion does not take the middle ground between the positions held by R. Eleazar and R. Yoḥanan but relates to the question of m. Meg. 1.8 about the languages allowed for the written Tora. Bar Qappara raises Greek to this level in support of R. Shimon b. Gamaliel’s opinion that only Greek is allowed for biblical scrolls (in addition to Hebrew).

⁵⁹It is possible but not necessary that Bar Qappara understood *יפת אלהים* along the lines of R. Hiyya b. Abba (b. Meg. 9b), who took the verb to signify beautification.

⁶⁰A parallel is found in Gen. R. 36.8: *יהי דברי תורה נאמרים בלשון של יפת בתוך אהלי* *שם* which specifies the Tora as the subject matter of Greek.

All this does not deny the close relationship all languages have to one another, with Hebrew, albeit implicitly, the mother of each. The motif of the seventy languages occurs in two additional situations apart from the Tower of Babel: God's speech and his revelation of the Tora.

1.3 The seventy languages and the one

When the motif of the seventy languages is appreciatively related to scriptural translations in the Mishna, it preserves an attitude towards translations which was significantly modified in other sources (m. Sot. 7.5):

ואחר כך הביאו את האבנים ובנו את המזבח וסדום בסיד וכתבו עליהן את כל דברי התורה שבעים לשון שנ' באר היטב

And afterwards they brought stones and built an altar and plastered them⁶¹ with plaster. And they wrote on them all the words of the Tora in seventy languages, as it is written, 'most distinctly' (Deut. 27.8).

The Hebrew *באר היטב* refers to the clarity of the script in which all the words are to be written,⁶² but the Mishna associates the clarity denoted by *באר* with the meaning of the Tora, which, in order to be fully understood, should be written in the seventy languages of the world.⁶³ Although in connection with writing, the verb *באר* qualifies the execution of the script (see Hab. 2.2), otherwise it may indeed denote exposition, such as the occasion when Moses began 'to expound' his teaching (Deut. 1.5). The same take on *באר היטב* in Deut. 27.8 also occurs in other sources such as the Palestinian Targum, the Tosefta and the Yerushalmi, and a Geniza

⁶¹ So ms Kaufman A50; the Albeck edn reads וסדוהו (and עליהן for עליו).

⁶² Cf. Hab. 2.2: ויעניי יהוה ויאמר כתוב בזכרון ובאר על הלחות למען ירוך קורא בו: 'The LORD answered me and said: Write the prophecy down, inscribe it clearly on tablets, so that it can be read easily'.

⁶³ This motif occurs in various co-texts in addition to the Babel-episode (see above, p. 21 n. 40) and the writing of the Tora after Joshua crossed the Jordan: the legal requirement for members of the Sanhedrin 'in order that the court should have no need of an interpreter' (b. Meg. 13b; b. San. 17a; b. Men. 65a); temple officers who need to expound halakhic issues in all languages (m. Sheq. 5.1); in contrast to the holy tongue to demonstrate the superiority of Joseph over against Pharaoh (see p. 15 n. 15 above); similarly, in the prayers of Jonah's companions during the shipwreck (Tan. ויקרא 8; PRE 9); God's self-revelation at Mt Sinai (b. Shab. 88b, see below; y. Ned. 3.2, 37d; y. Shebu. 3.9, 34d; Midr. Pss. 68.6; 92.3; Exod. R. 5.9; 28.6).

fragment of the Mekhilta on Deuteronomy,⁶⁴ but with important differences in the qualification of the seventy translations. The Mishna does not indicate that these translations were aimed at the nations—not even that they were intended for Israel’s enlightenment. The transcription of the Tora in every language—seventy being the number of all existing languages of the world—encapsulates its full meaning, accessible to all, in a tradition that reflects a receptive attitude to the value of translations for the meaning of the Tora.

The Mishna’s version is important on two counts. First, the Mishna reflects no concern with the written status of these translations.⁶⁵ That appears to have been too much for the authors of the Palestinian Targum, which brings the tradition into conformity with rabbinic norms about translation. In the version of TgCG^{aa}:

ותכתבון על אבניה ית כל פתגמי אוריתה הדה כתב חקיק ומן[פ]רש יאות מתקרא בחד
לשן ומתרגם בשבעין לשנין

And you will write on these stones all the words of this Tora, as a distinctly executed inscription, read in one language and translated into seventy languages.⁶⁶

In contrast to the *mishna*, the script exclusively refers to the Hebrew text, which was recited in Hebrew only (מתקרא בחד לשן). But as in the synagogue, the Hebrew recitation was accompanied by an oral-performative translation in seventy languages.⁶⁷ This Targum explains the clarity of the Tora in two ways: a distinctly executed script on the one hand, which comes close to the most probable meaning of the original verse itself but is absent from the *mishna*, and multiple translation on the other hand. Of course, it raises the question how seventy oral-performative translations can ever

⁶⁴ See S. Schechter, תפארת ישראל: מנחת תודה ומזכרת אהבה לכבוד מורנו ורבינו ישראל לוי ביום מלאת לו שבעים שנה (Breslau: Marcus, 1911), pp. 187–92; A. Yadin, ‘The Hammer on the Rock: Polysemy and the School of Rabbi Ishmael’, JSQ 10 (2003), pp. 1–17 (15–16).

⁶⁵ For the distinction between oral-performative and written translations, see Chs. Three, Four and Five.

⁶⁶ So also the FragTg^P, one more Cairo Geniza fragment and TgPsJ; see M.L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 111, 220; M.L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986), 1, pp. 347, 351.

⁶⁷ FragTg^{VNL} and TgNeof Deut. 27.8 omit ‘in one language’ but still make the same point. See also b. Sot. 35b. For the oral-performative translation, see Ch. Five.

be accommodated either within the narrative context of Deut. 27 (having just crossed the Jordan) or within the context of the target culture of the synagogue. The normative character of this targumic translation stands out. The Targum accommodates the apparently extant motif of the seventy translations, but seeks to distinguish the target texts from the Hebrew source text. In a sense, the Targums thereby bring out the unique feature of the *mishna*: the source text encompasses seventy languages.

Another approach is adopted in the *Tosefta* and the *Yerushalmi*, with similar consequences for the inclusive attitude towards translation. In the former version (t. Sot. 8.6, cf. y. Sot. 7.5, 21d):

ר' יהודה אומ' על גבי המזבח כתובה אמרו לו היאך למדו אומות העולם תורה א' להם מלמד שנתן הק' ב'ה' בלבם ושלחו נוטירים והשיאו את הכתב מעל האבנים בשבעים לשון באותה שעה נתחתם גזר דין של אומות העולם לבאר שחת
 R. Yehuda says, They inscribed it [the Tora] on [the stones of]⁶⁸ the altar. They said to him, [If so], how would the nations of the world learn the Tora? He said to them, [This teaches that] the Holy One blessed be He moved them to send their scribes and they transcribed what was written on the stones into seventy languages. At that moment the verdict against the nations of the world was sealed for the Pit of Destruction.

The *Tosefta* shares with the *Mishna*, and the Palestinian Targum, the basic interpretation of באר היטב as a translation into seventy languages, but in this version the nations prepare the seventy translations which consequently are no longer Jewish. Moreover, the translations only serve as evidence against them, that they cannot claim innocence and ignorance in their transgressions. The translations no longer make the Tora as explicit and clear as possible for the Jewish community as an inference from Deut. 27.8, but function as a legal prerequisite for the indictment of the nations. The *Tosefta* reveals a completely different attitude to the value of translations, with apologetic overtones, from the *Mishna*. There is a sensitivity here, which ultimately led to the conclusion that the seventy languages were not suitable for the Tora.

Whether the *Tosefta*'s version is earlier or later is a moot point. On the whole, the *Tosefta* is far more elaborate on the Blessings and the Curses than the, typically terse, *Mishna*, but how these versions relate to

⁶⁸ For the variant readings, see S. Lieberman, *ארוך לתוספתא*, באור ארוך כפשוטו: (10 vols.; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, repr. 2001), VIII, pp. 699–702. I quote the Erfurt ms here.

one another is not transparent.⁶⁹ For the motif of the seventy languages, on the other hand, the larger picture may not be of consequence, since the difference between both versions in this regard does not necessarily reflect the literary and chronological relationship between the two halakhic documents as a whole. As far as this unit is concerned, the Mishna's version is probably earlier because it relates the seventy languages to how the Tora was written on the stones, thereby explaining the Hebrew phrase באר היטב, whereas the connection with באר היטב in the Tosefta is tenuous at best (indeed, the keywords are not cited). At this point at least, the Tosefta is best explained as a response to, and modification of, an earlier tradition.

Second, the Mishna's version of the Tora written in seventy languages has a surprising and relevant halakhic co-text, because it concludes one of the ritual performances that is only to be conducted in the holy tongue (m. Sot. 7.2, 5, the Blessings and the Curses [Deut. 27.15-26]). The mishna thereby creates an immediate contrast between the performance of certain rituals to which a language condition applies and the integral translation of the Tora in any language. The multilingual Tora is a vestige of a period which may have placed a premium on the Hebrew language as the holy tongue but not one that excluded the production of integral written translations as valid expressions of the Tora.

The motif of a multilingual Tora accords well with Sifre Deut. 343 where God reveals the Tora to Israel in four different languages:

דבר אחר כשנגלה הקדוש ברוך הוא ליתן תורה לישראל לא בלשון אחד אמר להם אלא בארבעה לשונות שנאמר ויאמר ה' מסיני בא זה לשון עברי וזרח משעיר למו זה לשון רומי הופיע מהר פארן זה לשון ערבי ואתה מרבבות קדש זה לשון ארמי

Another Interpretation. When the Holy One blessed be He revealed himself to give the Tora to Israel, he did not speak to them in a single language, but in four languages, as it is said, 'And the LORD came from Sinai' (Deut. 33.2), that is Hebrew; 'and he dawned upon them from Seir', that is Latin; 'and he shone from Mount Paran', that is Arabic; 'And he came from holy myriads', that is Aramaic.

⁶⁹Hauptman recently argued that m. Sot. 7.5 is a condensed version of t. Sot. 8.6-9; J. Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 109-24. However, that m. Sot. 7.5 is so succinct as to suggest a larger narrative co-text does not prove dependence on the Tosefta unless the differences of arrangement can be proven to be in one direction, without influence of the Ur-Mishna. I do not think her evidence sustains such a conclusion for this mishna. In any case, she does not discuss the motif of the seventy languages.

God's self-revelation in four languages explains the mention of four different places in Deut. 33.2. Rabbinic exegesis commonly relates all the biblical accounts of a theophany from the South as found in Deut. 33.2, Jud. 5.4-5, Hab. 3.3 and Ps. 68.16 to the single revelation at Mt Sinai, which necessitates an explanation of why four localities feature rather than one. According to one widespread solution, the three supplementary locations show that God revealed his Tora to other nations first, as in the fourth unit of Sifre Deut. 343 where God approaches the Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites and Ishmaelites.⁷⁰ In the traditions that speak of God's approach to other nations, his use of languages other than Hebrew is not indicated, but even if a multilingual revelation is to be assumed, the unique element of this unit in Sifre is God's self-revelation in four languages to Israel.

The lingual interpretation of the four locations associates each place with a local vernacular: the locations of the proof-text determine the choice of language. Sinai is an obvious designation for Israel, thus Hebrew; Seir is Edom, the rabbinic short-hand for Rome, hence Latin;⁷¹ Mt Paran is located in Arabia and associated with Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arabs (Gen. 21.21); and מרבבות קדש refers to myriads of angels, or heaven, resulting in the surprising inference of Aramaic. The association of מרבבות קדש with angels also occurs in the ninth unit of Sifre Deut. §343, which makes the point that God stood out from his entourage unlike mortal kings.⁷² The same motif of the myriads of angels is attested in TgNeof and TgPsJ Deut. 33.2, in part reflecting ancient views of a theophany, in part triggered by the word קדוש which sometimes denotes 'angel' in the Hebrew Bible.⁷³ In fact, not just the locations but also the verbs may signify each language, as Gottlieb points out,⁷⁴ although only the Aramaic instance is

⁷⁰Edn Finkelstein, pp. 395-96. For parallels, see Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, pp. 406-10 and n. 464.

⁷¹In the parallel of Jud. 5.4, Edom takes the place of Seir. For Edom as Rome or Christianity, see Ginzberg, *Legends*, VII, p. 124.

⁷²Edn Finkelstein, pp. 398-99. Here the Hebrew keyword ואתה is interpreted as אות (thus not as an Aramaism): אות הוא בתוך רבבות קדש 'A sign He is among the myriads of holy ones'.

⁷³See Ps. 89.6,8; Job 5.1; 15.15; Zech. 14.5; Dan. 8.13.

⁷⁴I.B. Gottlieb, *Language Understanding in Sifre Deuteronomy: A Study of Language Consciousness in Rabbinic Exegesis* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1973), pp. 82-84.

clear: the Aramaism **וְאִתָּהּ**.⁷⁵ That **בּוֹא** does not occur in either Arabic or Aramaic, while **זֶרַח** would be connected with **orior**, and **יָפַע** with Arabic is perhaps too speculative.

Among these four languages, the picture of Hebrew and Aramaic stands out, for it belies common rabbinic views on either language. Hebrew is not identified as God's unique language but as one of four tongues used to communicate to Israel. No special privilege or position is accorded to it. This characterization of Hebrew is ill-at-ease with the connotations of Hebrew as the holy tongue. Aramaic is imputed to the angels who accompany God in the theophany. Viewed from this perspective, Aramaic attains the status of the angelic language, in stark contrast to claims that 'angels do not understand Aramaic' (b. *Sot.* 33b), but in agreement with views that the 'heavenly whisper' (**בַּת קוֹל**) spoke Aramaic—a view conjured to refute the claim that the angels do not understand it (*Ibid.*).

As significant as these two languages, is the selection of Arabic and Latin to address Israel. These are not languages which Jews generally understood in Late Antiquity, minorities notwithstanding. Greek does not feature here, nor in Sifre's later unit of the revelation to all peoples. Although the Roman administration used Greek in the Near East,⁷⁶ it used Latin for official internal communication. Were we to identify the two because the proposition **Seir = Edom** would not easily allow for Greek to be included otherwise, is special pleading. Greek is designated as **לֵעִי** or **יוֹנִית** in rabbinic literature,⁷⁷ while the distinction between the two languages follows from the contrast of the 'Roman language' (**לְשׁוֹן רֹמִי**) to Greek in *Est. R.* 4.12.⁷⁸ The absence of Greek and the presence of Latin

⁷⁵The word **וְאִתָּהּ** was understood as 'with him' in *TgOnq*, *LXX* and *Pesh*; thus the Aramaism may not have contributed to the interpretation, but it would have been unlikely to go ignored. See also n. 72 above.

⁷⁶On the limited use of Latin in the Near East, see F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 527–28.

⁷⁷Although **לֵעִי** is routinely interpreted as 'Greek' by many scholars, the use of the expression **לֵעִי יוֹנִי** followed by **לֵעִי בְּכָל** in b. *Meg.* 18a indicates that other languages are denoted by **לֵעִי**, **לֵעִי** as well. It is more correct to say that it may refer to Greek in practice, but refers to any non-Hebrew vernacular in theory. However, in the list of four languages in y. *Meg.* 1.11(8), **לֵעִי בְּכָל** clearly denotes Greek, which is the reason for the generalization.

⁷⁸For a relatively early date of this part of *Est. R.*, see M.B. Lerner, 'The Works of Aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim', in S. Safrai, Z. Safrai, J. Schwartz and P.J. Tomson (eds.), *The Literature of the Sages*, 11 (CRINT, 2.3b; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2006), pp. 133–229 (181).

and Arabic in an address to Israel sit uneasily with any historical awareness of the languages used by Jews in Late Antiquity.⁷⁹ On the other hand, we need to tread cautiously in evaluating the unusual language selection of this unit. To impose a historical context upon an interpretation which is grounded in a close reading of Deut. 33.2 and follows its own logic to generate meaning—hence may have barred Greek from inclusion on a purely textual basis—is to risk a distortion of what this midrash tries to convey.⁸⁰

Another way of looking at this unit is to consider its place within the structure of §343, which interprets the lemmata of Deut. 33.2 in an orderly and thematic progression, with multiple interpretations of the same lemmata. Notwithstanding the possibility that the present position of this unit does not reflect its original interpretative drift, its tenor among the units of §343 appears to have been well-orchestrated. In between the first and last units, which focus on the praise always due to God first and the flaming nature of his Word,⁸¹ a series of units lays out the meaning of God's self-manifestation at Mt Sinai, expressing a pervasive polarity between Israel and the world. The first point made is the multilingual nature of God's self-manifestation to monolingual Israel, with the expected single language explicitly negated. This unit is followed by one which sets forth the same Hebrew lemmata as evidence for God's manifestation from the four directions of the wind, then by a more elaborate unit in which God also offered all the nations the Tora. In the dialogue between God and the four nations descending from the ancestors Esau, Ammon, Moab, and Ishmael, these nations reject the gift because they cannot keep the most basic of commands.⁸² Together, these three units expound God's

⁷⁹Cf. Est. R. 4.12: 'אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא דבר עם ישראל בלשון שלמדו 'However, the Holy One blessed be He spoke to Israel in the language which they had learnt'.

⁸⁰On historical interpretations without paying due attention to hermeneutics and textual matters, see C.E. Hayes, *Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah Zarah* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁸¹See S.D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 28–49.

⁸²Based on Exod. 20.13. These commands are also part of the Noahite commands, which play a part in the *marshal* in this unit. On this motif, see also S. Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), p. 211.

manifestation at four locations in three fourfolds: language, direction and nation. This sequence seems to imply, as Fraade observes,⁸³ that God's language in revelation is universal and includes the full range of human tongues: just as God appeared from the four directions of the wind and to all the nations of the world, so encompassing is his lingual revelation. Sifre thus encapsulates the languages of the world, elsewhere represented as seventy, in four, close as it steers to the Hebrew source text it seeks to expatiate.

The inclusion of Latin is structural beyond any inspiration by the proof-text. Focusing on each location of the theophany, the following units adumbrate the fate of the world, which will be shaken as profoundly in a future punishment as when the Tora was given to Israel, the impression on the nations of the power of the Tora in Israel's possession, God's awesome shining in the eschatological days of Gog and Magog and the Messianic era, and the incongruity of Israel's suffering with her loyalty to God. Woven together from familiar themes and motifs, Sifre Deut. 343 displays a coherent structure which emphasizes Israel's election and Tora-imbued power, the rejection and the ultimate punishment which the nations will suffer—and, in particular, Esau = Rome, which features in three separate units and bears the brunt of due retribution. Sifre includes Latin among the languages of the multilingual self-manifestation of God to draw attention to Rome.

The notion of the multilingual Tora in Sifre Deut. 343 differs from that of the seventy translations in m. Sot. 7.5 and parallels, because the multilingual revelation is divine and instantaneous, whereas the writing on the stones is human and simultaneous. In this respect, Sifre's tradition is more reminiscent of the famous motif of God's word as a hammer producing many sparks as it smashes a rock (b. Shab. 88b after MS Ox23):⁸⁴

א"ר יוחנן מאי דכתיב י"י יתן אומר המבשרות צבא רב כל דבור ודבור שיצא מפי
הב"ה נתחלק לשבעים לשון דבי ר' ישמעאל תאנא וכפטיש יפוצץ סלע מה פטיש זה
מתחלק לכמה ניצוצות אף כל דבור ודבור שיצא מפי הב"ה נתחלק לשבעים לשון
R. Yohanan said, What is meant by the verse, "The LORD gives a command;

⁸³Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, pp. 30–32.

⁸⁴On the difficulty of the metaphor in Jer. 23.29 and b. Shab. 88b, see D. Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 17–18; Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, pp. 123–24 and 259 n. 4; Yadin, "The Hammer on the Rock", pp. 2–3.

the women who bring the news are a great host'? (Ps. 68.12) Every single word that went forth from the Almighty split up into seventy languages.

The School of R. Ishmael taught: 'And like a hammer that smashes the rock' (Jer. 23.29)—just as a hammer split into many sparks, so every single word that went forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, split into seventy languages.

Both R. Yohanan and the school of R. Ishmael relate their verses to the Ten Commandments. Their statements follow a series of teachings about Israel's acceptance of the Tora and concern God's multilingual manifestation at Mt Sinai. They refer to distinct verses, the command of Ps. 68.12 and the sparks produced by the hammer of Jer. 23.29, forgoing Ps. 62.12, which is often cited in earlier midrash to prove the multiple understandings of a single verse. The image of God's seventyfold language ties in with Sifre's multilingual revelation. In a sense, this passage conveys the nature of God's multilingual revelation more cogently than (but not fundamentally differently from) the passage of Sifre: all languages were spoken at one and the same time, flowing from God's act of speaking. The unitary language, once spoken by all before Babel, is manifest again in the ultimate revelation.

A close parallel to b. Shab. 88b is b. San. 34a, where 'every single verse' splits into seventy 'shades of meaning' (טעמים). In this latter form, the tradition has become a stalwart support for biblical polysemy in rabbinic hermeneutics. But the view that in rabbinic thought every single verse has multiple meanings has been challenged in recent studies by Yadin and Boyarin, who argue for a relatively late appearance of the rabbinic notion of polysemy.⁸⁵ In their opinion, this view is to be relegated to the later stages of rabbinic thinking, did not occur to the Tannaim (or at least not to R. Ishmael's school), and should be distinguished from the polyglossia of b. Shab. 88b, which is not identical to polysemy. The polyglossia of the multilingual Tora on stone in m. Sot. 7:5 became 'detached' from its 'textual-exegetic moorings' to drift into the new territory of the theo-

⁸⁵ See Yadin, 'The Hammer on the Rock', pp. 1–17; D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 189–92. Cf. H. Mack, *ספר היובל לרב מרדכי*, in M. Bar-Asher (ed.), *שבועים פנים לתורה: למהלכו של ביטוי*, (Jerusalem: Akamedon, 1992), II, pp. 449–62; S.D. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism Revisited: Between Praxis and Thematization', *AJS Review* 31 (2007), pp. 1–40.

phany, with the motif of a multilingual Tora transmutating to a polysemic Tora.⁸⁶ In a thoughtful response,⁸⁷ Fraade addresses the 'multivocality' expressed in rabbinic literature and demonstrates that we should not distance polyglossia from the notion of polysemy too firmly or ascribe a chronological development to the differences between them. Indeed, the differences should not obscure the common ground that God's holy tongue finds a particular expression in each of the world's languages. The difference that readers are the agents of the multilingual Tora as written or interpreted, whereas God is the agent of the multilingual Tora as revealed, does not diminish the ultimate implication that the sum of all languages together conveys the full sense of the holy tongue. It is only a single step away to argue that the additional semantic shades other languages bring into play reflect the full meaning of the Tora. That dual image of one holy tongue and seventy languages in God's multilingual self-disclosure to Israel is reminiscent of R. Eleazar's seventy languages that equal the single language of Gen. 11.1 and reflect the communicative harmony in place before the dispersion. What makes these thoughts possible in the first place, just like the practice of etymology, is the notion of the family of languages descending from the original tongue. In his commentary to Zeph. 3.14-18, Jerome calls Hebrew the mother of all languages, *lingua Hebraica omnium linguarum matrix*.⁸⁸ In early rabbinic literature, this view may not be encountered so explicitly, but is never far away either: the confusion of languages in Babylon was preceded by a unitary holy tongue or with a harmony of multiple languages. All the necessary preconditions for the view that all languages descend from one mother language are in place.

While the positive appreciation of the linguistic kinship of all languages found expression in the notion of a Tora translated into seventy languages, it comes as no surprise that some sources redress the perceived dangers of a multilingual Tora. The question whether the Tora could be translated at all prompted itself as a matter of course. Since there is no absolute transparency between one language and another, already Ben Sira's grandson, who translated his grandfather's work into Greek,

⁸⁶ See Yadin, 'The Hammer on the Rock', p. 16.

⁸⁷ Fraade, 'Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism'.

⁸⁸ Hieronymus, *Commentarii in Prophetas minores* (ed. M. Adriaen; 2 vols.; CCSL, 76A; Turnhout: Brepols, 1970), p. 708.

observes the practical difficulty of translation.⁸⁹ Wherever a text is divine and revealed, such difficulties tend to become barriers. Reluctance to translate religious texts is attested in Roman Egypt, where Iamblichus refrains from translation because, he argues: 'The words of the ancient prayers should be kept exactly as they are, as though they were holy sanctuaries: nothing should be removed from them, and nothing added'.⁹⁰ Translation of the numinous is soon dubious.⁹¹ For the rabbis, who were involved in many translational activities—the revisions of the Old Greek translation by Aquila and Symmachus, and probably the kernel of the Babylonian Targums, stem from the late Tannaitic period⁹²—the stakes involved in translating could not have been higher, famously illustrated by the classic dictum of R. Yehuda ben Ilai: 'R. Yehuda says, Whoever renders a verse plainly is a liar; and whoever adds to it is a blasphemer and a reviler'.⁹³ At first sight R. Yehuda's saying leaves little room to translate the Scriptures at all.⁹⁴ He denounces both literal translations (which take the place of translations that 'omit') and also more free renderings that do not faithfully reflect the meaning of the Hebrew original and which

⁸⁹In the translation of S.P. Brock, 'To Revise or Not to Revise: Attitudes to Jewish Biblical Translation', in G.J. Brooke and B. Lindars (eds.), *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings* (Manchester, 1990) (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 301–38 (306): 'For it is impossible for a translator to find precise equivalents for the original Hebrew in another language. Not only with this book, but with the Law, the prophets and the rest of the writings, it makes no small difference to read them in the original.'

⁹⁰*Myst.* 7.5, cited after S.P. Brock, 'Aspects of Translation Techniques in Antiquity', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979), pp. 69–87 (76); see also G. Préaux, 'De la Grèce Classique à l'Égypte Hellénistique: traduire ou ne pas traduire', *Chronique d'Égypte* 42 (1967), pp. 369–83.

⁹¹G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford University Press, 3rd edn, 1998), p. 250.

⁹²For a survey of dates of TgJon, see R.P. Gordon, *Studies in the Targum to the Twelve Prophets: From Nahum to Malachi* (VTSup, 51; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994). For the wealth of literature on the controversial dating of the Targums, see B. Grossfeld, *A Bibliography of Targum Literature, I–III* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1973, 1977, 1990).

⁹³b. Qid. 49a; t. Meg. 3.41, discussed more fully at p. 164 below.

⁹⁴See J. Goldin, 'Reflections on Translation and Midrash', in J. Goldin, *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), pp. 239–52 (242); D.M. Golomb, '"A Liar, A Blasphemer, A Reviler": The Role of Biblical Ambiguity in the Palestinian Pentateuchal Targumim', in P.V.M. Flesher (ed.), *Targum Studies, 1. Textual and Contextual Studies in the Pentateuchal Targums* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 135–46.

are, for that reason, tantamount to blasphemy. On reflection, however, the use of the terms 'omit'—not by R. Yehuda, admittedly, who assumes it under formal translation, but in the commentary of t. Meg. 3.4r—and 'add' could be understood to refer to meaning, in the context of the classical understanding of interpretative fidelity, which reflected preservation of the original sense rather than its formal transposition to another language. As a consequence, he may have allowed for a translation which he deemed faithful in meaning to the original.⁹⁵ Other, mostly later, sources seem less lenient than R. Yehuda may or may not have been. For example, Sef. T. 1.6 compares the translation of the seventy to the making of the golden calf, 'because the Tora cannot be translated appropriately'.⁹⁶

Apart from misrepresentation or mismatch of language equivalents, another danger lurks behind the phenomenon of translation. Bible translations now and then tend to usurp the position of the original text in the experience of their users. When the differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text resulted in attempts at revision of the Old Greek translation, Philo appealed to divine inspiration in defence of the latter.⁹⁷ That the danger of a Bible translation acquiring independent authority was far from hypothetical appears from the 'discussion' in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* which was, in part, informed by differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew text. Both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus disapproved of revisions of the Septuagint which undercut their arguments.⁹⁸ Concern for both the correct text and correct interpretation self-evidently called attention to the extant translations or, possibly, the wording of oral translation.

To summarize, the rabbinic notion of the family of languages gave rise to different valuations of translation. Two tendencies are discernible, one which values translations without playing them off against the holy tongue, and one which highlights the holy tongue for internal, Jewish use, pushing the phenomenon of seventy translations to the sphere of gentile accountability for their transgressions. Both tendencies are attested

⁹⁵ See p. 164 below; cf. S. Inowlocki, 'Neither Adding nor Omitting Anything: Josephus' Promise not to Modify the Scriptures in Greek and Latin Context', *JJS* 56 (2005), pp. 48–65.

⁹⁶ See p. 298 below.

⁹⁷ Brock, 'To Revise or Not to Revise', pp. 301–38.

⁹⁸ In particular the interpretation of Isa. 7.14. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 71.1; cf. 68.7–8; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 3.21, 1–3.

in early sources, and may well have been simultaneous responses rather than sequential ones. Still, the notion of the family of languages and the various understandings of God's multilingual revelation raise the question how the rabbis construed language selection in general and the status of scriptural translation in particular. The following chapters seek to address the (rabbinic) status of translation, its definition and ideal practice, as well as the development of its conception, ultimately set off against the rabbinic use of scriptural translation for halakhic practice.

The holy tongue

As a holy tongue, Hebrew was certainly not unique in the ancient Near East.¹ Many cultures fostered an often almost fossilized language in which their religions require(d) certain rituals to be performed. Sumerian occupied an elevated position among the Akkadian speaking Babylonians, Zoroastrianism singles out Old-Iranian, Hinduism Sanskrit, and in the Roman state religion Greek held a special position, as did Old-Phoenician in Ancient Carthago. These languages invariably differed from the vernacular(s), but also, if sometimes more subtly, from the current literary language, in ways similar to the difference between Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew. That these religious, or more precisely, ritual languages were considered holy comes as no surprise. In the Ancient Near East, all religious writings were considered sacred *per se*.² Ancient scribes were religious functionaries, often priests, who formed part and parcel of the sacred tradition in which they had been educated. Theirs was a monopoly of few experts. Their language was a language of the few. The sacred nature of writ helps to explain the occurrence of texts that were never intended for reading, yet meticulously prepared.³

There can be little doubt that the term and idea of Hebrew as the holy tongue goes back as far as the late Second Temple period.⁴ The Talmudim and Midrashim attest to its full-fledged mythological form, in which לשון הקודש refers to Hebrew as the language by which the world was created when God spoke,⁵ the language in which God communicated with Moses and handed down the Tora. As the primordial language which originated with God, the holy tongue is intelligible to the angels and humankind

¹J.F.A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 24.

²See J. Leipoldt and S. Morenz, *Heilige Schriften: Betrachtungen zur Religionsgeschichte der antiken Mittelmeerwelt* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1953); K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

³Such as the texts in tefillin and mezuzot, Akkadian and Egyptian inscriptions in dark, small hallways of temples, and, later, texts on bowls which were buried in the ground.

⁴See Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', pp. 49–107. My analysis of the rabbinic sources differs from his. See further Weitzman, 'Judaism', iv, pp. 1827–31.

⁵See Ch. One, p. 21 above.

alike.⁶ In medieval times, speculation about the alphabet and its numerical values in the mystical tradition introduced new connotations of the term 'holy tongue'.

The idea that Hebrew is unique inevitably left its mark on the rabbinic assessment of other languages. In several passages the holy tongue, as the language of the Holy Writ, is contrasted with other languages used for Bible translation.⁷ Joseph outwits the Egyptians not just through his amazing command of the seventy tongues, which the Egyptians wrote down to try him, but especially because he also knew the holy tongue, whereas they did not.⁸ The Israelites retained their identity because they did not abandon the holy tongue despite the Egyptian environment in which they lived.⁹ Only the holy tongue reveals connections which the other languages fail to establish. In Hebrew, the words 'man' and 'woman' are etymologically related,¹⁰ but not in Greek or Aramaic; the bronze serpent was made of bronze because the words for 'copper' and 'serpent' are related.¹¹ All this amounts to an intrinsic connection between creation and Hebrew; the Tora could only have been written in Hebrew.

Myths contribute to social reality, as Aaron points out,¹² without the mythology ever being identical to 'a full theory of native organization'. His is an important caveat, since the evidence for the role and meaning of the notion of the holy tongue in Early Judaism is far more complicated than commonly perceived, notwithstanding the evidence for the myth as briefly related so far. As late as the thirteenth century CE, the Rashba (Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret) claimed in his commentary on Bavli Megilla that the holy tongue is not identical to Hebrew.¹³ He points out that languages other than Hebrew can justifiably be called 'holy tongue', which

⁶ See, e.g., b. Hag. 16a; ARN A 37; Mek. SbY וארא 6.2.

⁷ See, e.g., b. San. 21b and b. Shab. 115a, to be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters.

⁸ See p. 15 n. 15 above.

⁹ Lev. R. 32.5; Pes. K. 11.6; TanB. בלק 25; Tan. בלק 16; Midr. Ps. 114; Sek. T. Gen. 47.

¹⁰ That is, in the eyes of the rabbis. Today, linguists differentiate between the origins of both words in Hebrew.

¹¹ Gen. R. 31.8; 18.4. See above, p. 20.

¹² Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', p. 53, citing B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1992), p. 117.

¹³ H.Z. Dimitrovski, *חידושי הרשב"א: מסכת מגילה* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2000), p. 19.

he inferred from b. Meg. 18b, which allows recitation of the book of Esther in 'Coptic to the Copts and Hebrew to the Hebrews'.¹⁴ This somewhat surprising claim, which was made at a time when mystical speculation about the role of the Hebrew language in the creation of the world had already made considerable inroads in European Judaism, stands in a long tradition of reading the biblical text in translation.¹⁵ Since the vast majority of Jews no longer spoke or understood Hebrew by the end of the Second Temple period, Bible translations had long gained a foothold in Jewish religious life. But could someone fulfil his religious obligation by reciting a translation of the Hebrew?

Halakhic opinion has been divided ever since the issue was raised. Already in tractate Megilla of the Bavli, three positions are laid out (17b–18b): that reading in a foreign language is allowed only to those who do not understand any Hebrew; that having a foreign vernacular is sufficient by itself, even if one would also understand Hebrew; that Greek is valid (כשר) for everyone, whether or not one understands any Greek, just as Hebrew is sufficient whether or not one understands it. In the latter circumstance, Greek is a 'holy tongue' in the sense that it is a language in which one may fulfil a particular religious obligation.¹⁶ On Rashba's understanding, a holy language is the language in which one may fulfil a religious obligation. This notion runs counter not only to the long-established notion that Hebrew was privileged for religious use as the language spoken at the sanctuary, and tantamount to the 'holy language' as a result, but more importantly, also to the notion that Hebrew, whatever the context of its usage, was 'holy' by default. The lenient opinions were eventually abandoned, primarily because they were restricted to Greek, the usefulness of which kept equal pace with the diminishing size of the Byzantine Empire.

That a full-scale study is desirable would appear from the common misperception that the most frequently used expression to refer to Hebrew is 'the holy tongue', while in truth various expressions exist. For certain purposes, 'Ashurit', ironical as the term may seem, was even more common

¹⁴For his opinion on the script, see p. 274 below.

¹⁵Cf. m. Meg. 1.8; 2.1.

¹⁶Indeed, two Jewish Greek works identify Greek as the language of creation: Syb. Or. 3.24–26; 2 En. 30.13; so S. Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', *Past & Present* 148 (1995), pp. 3–47 (32 n. 69).

than 'holy tongue'.¹⁷ To acquire a fuller grasp of the correlation between language selection and the notion of the holy tongue, I will examine the connotations of לשון הקודש for the early rabbis with a clear focus on its occurrences in Tannaitic sources, notwithstanding some excursions into parallel discussions in Talmud and Midrash. I am not so much interested in the prehistory of the concept as in its use among the early rabbis,¹⁸ but I will start with the earliest attestation of the expression 'holy tongue' in the Dead Sea scrolls to demonstrate the acute danger of generalizations that are all too often connected with the term 'holy tongue'.

Here, I will analyse the time-arrested reflections on the holy tongue. Instead of reading the whole set of connotations into every co-text of the term, I propose to study its occurrences in Tannaitic literature to see which task the concept fulfils, what meaning it conveys, and what would seem to have been gained or lost in the process. It will soon become clear that the early rabbis use the term only in connection with a limited set of rituals, which were discussed extensively for the language in which they had to be performed. Charting these discussions reveals certain tendencies which help us understand rabbinic thought on the holy tongue and language selection and to appreciate the socio-historical change of context which influenced this thought. The analysis begins with the earliest attestation of the term in the Dead Sea Scrolls (section 2.1), then moves to the Mishna (section 2.2) which, after a fuller analysis of rabbinic arguments and the socio-historical context of the rituals involved (sections 2.3–5), is compared with the Tosefta (section 2.6). I will conclude with the relevance of the discussions for rabbinic thinking on language.

2.1 The holy tongue in Qumran

The term לשון הקודש occurs for the first time in a fragment found in the fourth cave of Qumran, 4Q464 f 3 ll. 7-8. The editors of this fragment, Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, have repeatedly argued that this fragment is evidence for the full-blown concept of the holy tongue, that is Hebrew, as the primordial language by which the world was created, and the unifying

¹⁷Pace Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity', p. 33.

¹⁸For a fuller survey including Second Temple literature, see Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language'. A general study is Sawyer, *Sacred Languages*, who is relatively brief on the Jewish sources but helpfully draws on other cultures as well as socio-linguistics.

'pure speech' which will be spoken at the end of days.¹⁹ Although explicit references to either primordial or eschatological language are absent in this fragment, they use late rabbinic parallels to fill in the gaps.

4Q464 is a badly damaged fragment with very little context for the term under discussion. What is left includes a quotation from Zeph. 3.9: *אל עמים שפה ברורה* '[I will change the speech] of the nations to a pure speech' in close proximity to the term 'holy tongue', preceded by the isolated words *עד עולם* 'forever'. Eshel and Stone take these phrases as evidence for an eschatological context of 'the holy tongue',²⁰ in which Zeph. 3.9 foretells the reversal of the confusion of languages resulting from building the Tower of Babel.²¹ Following Gen. 11.1, the world was once united in thought and language: *ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים* 'Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words'. They adduce further evidence for the notion that Hebrew as the primordial language had been lost to mankind in the debacle of the Tower of Babel, so that Abram had to be taught Hebrew again by the angel who is Jubilees' authorial voice (Jub. 12.25-26).²² Other traditions refer to a unified language at the end of days.²³ The three components of Hebrew/holy tongue, the Tower of Babel, and Zephaniah's linguistic eschaton are linked in Midr. Tan. נח 19 (28 in Buber's version).

¹⁹E. Eshel and M. Stone, 'An exposition on the Patriarchs (4Q464) and two other documents (4Q464a and 4Q464b)', *Le Muséon* 105 (1992), pp. 243-64; E. Eshel and M. Stone, *לשון הקודש באחרית הימים לאור קטע מקומראן*, *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), pp. 169-77. See further M. Bernstein, 'שלוש הערות על תעודת קומראן', *Tarbiz* 65 (1995-1996), pp. 29-32; J. Poirier, '4Q464: Not eschatological', *RevQ* 20(2002), pp. 583-87. The official edition is: M. Broshi et al. (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4, XIV: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, 19; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

²⁰Compare 4Q403: *ותשם פי כחרב חדה ולשוני פתחה לדברי קודש*.

²¹See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 11, From Noah to Abraham, Genesis VI 9—XI 32 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964), pp. 230-31.

²²See also Jub. 3.28; *y. Meg.* 1.11(8), 71b; *TgNeof*, *TgPsJ* and *FragTg Gen.* 11.1; *TanB.* נח 28 (*Tan.* 19); Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 16.11; Pseudo-Clementine, *Recognitions* 1.30.

²³*T. Jud.* 25.3 and many rabbinic traditions, although the latter, using Zeph. 3.9 as proof-text, are mainly concerned with the unification rather than the language; see *b. Ber.* 57b; *b. A. Zar.* 24a; *y. A. Zar.* 2.1, 40c; *Gen. R.* 88.7; *Midr. Zuta* (Canticles) 5 [9]; *TanB.* וירא 38; *Midr. Ps.* 66.1; *T. d. Eliyy.* 20; *Leq. T. Gen.* 19.11; *Leq. T. Gen.* 22.18; *Leq. T. Gen.* 49.10; *Sek. T. Gen.* 15; *Sek. T. Gen.* 7; J.D. Eisenstein, *אוצר מדרשים* (New York: J.D. Eisenstein, 1915), no. 71, 127, 234, 395; *Pit. Tor.* 277; *Yalq. S.* 1 Sam. §122; *Yalq. S. Zeph.* §567; *Yalq. S. Ps.* 66 §790.

In their opinion, this fragment deals 'a fatal blow' to a more reductive interpretation of לשון הקודש as the language used in the Temple service,²⁴ which highlights a particular function and locale of the language in comparison with other vernaculars which had made considerable inroads in Jewish (and non-Jewish) society during the Second Temple period, without evoking an elaborate myth of Hebrew as a unique language *per se*—but not necessarily denying that such mythological overtones played a part in conceptualizations of Hebrew. Conversely, Eshel and Stone generalize the connotations of the 'holy tongue' without advancing our understanding of the role that Hebrew as a holy tongue played in Jewish society and the emerging rabbinic movement. It does not occur to them that a single occurrence in a fragmentary text may not shed light on the meaning of the concept 'holy tongue' for anyone but the authors of that particular text.

Some clarification is in order as to what kind of Hebrew is conceived of as holy. Are we referring to God's language, Rabbinic Hebrew as used in halakhic discourse, or any Hebrew no matter what the circumstances?²⁵ The term may refer to Hebrew *per se* as in a linguistic continuum, without any distinction between Biblical and post-biblical Hebrew,²⁶ or in a functional continuum, without any differentiation between liturgical, ritual, academic and 'common' language.²⁷ The rabbis differentiated between לשון בני אדם 'common parlance' and לשון תורה 'the language of the Tora'.²⁸ While there is a vernacular element in the way 'common parlance' is understood in

²⁴E. Levine, 'Some Characteristics of Pseudo-Jonathan to Genesis', *Augustinianum* 11 (1971), pp. 89–103 (97); P. Schäfer, *Die Vorstellung vom heiligen Geist in der rabbinischen Literatur* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1972), pp. 137–39; Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity', p. 33.

²⁵In their article לשון הקודש, p. 173 n. 10, Eshel and Stone suggest that the term should be understood as God's language, following the Yerushalmi, but what this means and implies remains opaque.

²⁶Whether the sages were aware of the differences between their version of Hebrew and Biblical Hebrew, or wished to acknowledge them, is unclear; however, some awareness of difference is attested by the statement of R. Yoḥanan, לעצמה לשון חכמים לעצמו, 'The language of the Tora is one thing, and that of the sages another' (b. A. Zar. 58b, par. b. Hul. 137b). Similarly, b. Qid. 2b: תני לישנא דאורייתא ולבסוף תני לישנא דרבנן 'At first he taught in the language of the Tora, then he taught in the rabbinic idiom'.

²⁷The Dead Sea scrolls refer to an 'uncircumcised tongue', which is assumed to denote a form of post-biblical Hebrew, in Hodayoth 2.18–19 (1Q35); M. Mansoor, *The Thansgiving Hymns* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), p. 107. Whether or not this refers to Hebrew must remain open.

²⁸The Bavli has 11 attestations, the Yerushalmi 9; see y. Eruv. 03.1, 20d@3.1, 20d; y. Ned. 6.1, 39c; 6.3(4), 39d (2x in other editions); 7.1, 40b (partly restored by a corrector but clearly

the sources, the distinction pertains to a legal and hermeneutic precision of reference rather than to genuine dialectal difference. In the case of R. Ishmael's famous rule that 'the Tora speaks human language', the expression denotes hermeneutically unmarked language which does not require special interpretation.²⁹

A pointer to a more nuanced understanding of the term 'holy tongue' may be found in a somewhat enigmatic tradition found in *Genesis Rabba*, which comments on Rachel's choice of name for Benjamin: "She called his name Ben Oni" (Gen. 35.18)—the son of my sorrow; "but his father called him Benjamin"—in the holy tongue'.³⁰ Since both names are Hebrew, this double comment has confused commentators. What sets 'Benjamin' apart from 'Ben-Oni'? It has been suggested that the original name Rachel gave may not have been Hebrew,³¹ which makes little sense since the Tora does not distinguish between the language of both names. The difference is to be sought in the perception of the anonymous midrashist who expresses the view that one Hebrew name is given in the holy tongue, whereas another Hebrew name is not. As the name Benjamin won the day, it seems plausible that the nomer 'holy tongue' reflects the higher status of this name, perhaps because it does not reflect Rachel's pain but Benjamin's essence, a truth not conveyed by 'Ben-Oni'.

We also know that the rabbis distinguished between 'secular' and 'religious' language and would not have considered every subject matter which was expressed in Hebrew as sacred. In a narrative that localizes Rabbi's halakhic discussion in the bathhouse, Abaye remarks, דברים של חול מותר לאומרם בלשון קודש של קודש אסור לאומרם בלשון חול, 'secular matters may be said in the holy tongue, but holy matters may not be said in a secular language' (b. Shab. 40b, par. b. A. Zar. 44b). Abaye's opinion does not imply, at least not generally, that religious obligations always required Hebrew. When a shepherd blesses his sandwich in Aramaic, בריך מריה דהאי, פיתא, 'Blessed be the Master of this bread', rather than in the holy tongue,

implied; scribal error due to homoiocartan); 75, 40c; 8.1, 40d (2x); b. Ber. 55a; b. R. Hash. 12b; b. Arak. 9b; 19b (3x); b. Ned. 30b; 49a (2x); 51b. Cf. J. Emerton, 'The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus', *JTS* 24 (1973), pp. 1–23 (9–11).

²⁹For this rule, see p. 16 n. 19 above.

³⁰Gen. R. 82.9. The same tradition occurs in *TgNeof* Gen. 35.18: וקרא שמה בר עערי ואבוי: הוה קרי ליה בית קדשה בנימין.

³¹Indeed, two witnesses add to עערי בן the words ארמי בלשון, suggesting that the Hebrew name had been translated from Aramaic; edn Theodor-Albeck p. 987.

Rav declares the blessing valid (b. Ber. 40b).³² There are many more rituals for whose performance any language was permitted, as I will show below. Thus, all matters Hebrew are not necessarily holy, while language that is may not have been couched in Hebrew.

In presenting their evidence, heavily reliant on a late Midrash, Stone and Eshel have been too selective and pay insufficient attention to the term's less than uniform deployment in early Jewish sources. They quote R. Yoḥanan's opinion that the language spoken before the confusion of Babel was Hebrew (y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b), but do not alert to the opposite and juxtaposed opinion of R. Eleazar that they were speaking seventy languages. The point R. Eleazar made is that all peoples were of one thought, thus metaphorically spoke 'the same language', which is the main thrust of Zeph. 3.9 and thus casts doubt on the identification with Hebrew. Aaron rightly cautions that the type of eschaton epitomized by 4Q464 cannot be ascertained due to lack of context, if the fragment is eschatological at all,³³ because we remain in the dark what Zeph. 3.9's 'pure speech' entails in 4Q464, how universal it was deemed to be.³⁴ There are also differences of opinion in our sources with regard to the language spoken immediately before the Babel episode. If Hebrew had been lost to mankind in the Fall, as Jubilees states (12.25; cf. 3.28), the single, unifying language of Babel to which Zeph. 3.9 alludes cannot have been Hebrew. Indeed, Jubilees remains opaque about that language (10.18-26), and focuses on Hebrew as Abram's language and a sign of his offspring as the chosen ones.³⁵ Nor is it clear which type and functions of language are implied. As 4Q464 cannot answer these questions, this fragment cannot deliver the blueprint for the meaning of this term among all Jews in the late Second Temple period.

There is nothing to contradict the assumption that the mythological connotations of the 'holy tongue' are a secondary development from an original understanding of the term as restricted to ritual and liturgical

³²The use of Hebrew as 'holy tongue' is also attested in the case of someone who entices others to idolatry: 'who entices speaks in the holy tongue, while one who beguiles speaks in ordinary language. If the one who beguiles speaks in the holy tongue, he falls into the category of one who entices' (y. San. 7.10, 25d). The very use of Hebrew implies a higher category.

³³Denied by Poirier, '4Q464: Not Eschatological'.

³⁴The universal language of the end of days is not specified in T. Jud. 25.3.

³⁵So Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', pp. 72-74.

language. Such a limited interpretation would seem to be suggested not only by similar functions of holy tongues in the surrounding cultures,³⁶ but also by TgNeof Gen. 11.1:

והוון כל דיירי דארעא לשן חד וממלל חד ובלשן בית קדשה הוון משתעין דבה אתברי
עלמא מן שרייה

Now all the inhabitants of the earth were one language and one speech, and they used to speak in the language of the sanctuary in which the world was created from the beginning.³⁷

Even if the term *בית קודשא* refers to the 'language of the synagogue', as Shinan argues,³⁸ the primary locus of this language remains in the liturgical realm. Such is the connotation of the reference to David's Psalms composed *בבלשן בית קודשא* 'in the language of the Temple' (or synagogue).³⁹ In other words, *בית קודשא* is derived from an interpretation in which *לשון המקדש* stood for *לשון הקודש*.⁴⁰ That is not to argue for the historical priority of the rabbinic understanding (whatever the merit of any historical

³⁶ Sawyer, *Sacred Languages*, pp. 23–24.

³⁷ TgNeof, to be sure, is to be dated in the 4th c. CE at the earliest. See also TgNeof Gen. 2.19; 22.1; 31.47; 35.18; 45.12; Exod. 3.4.

³⁸ A. Shinan, *בתרגומים הארמיים לתורה*, Beth Miqra 66 (1976), pp. 472–74; A. Shinan, *תרגום ואגדה בו* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), pp. 113–15; A. Shinan, 'The Aramaic Targum as a Mirror of Galilean Jewry', in L.I. Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), pp. 241–51 (248–50). Shinan's argument is based on the targumic term *בית מקדשא* for the Temple, in contrast to *בית קודשא*. For my purposes it is not decisive whether the latter term denotes the synagogue, because if it does it still originated as a designation for the Temple as in TgNeof Exod. 28.29, 35, 43; 29.6 and many other occurrences.

Schwartz initially argued that no evidence for the designation of a synagogue as a holy place with the term *בית קודשא* or *הקודש* exists ('Language, Power and Identity', p. 33 n. 73), which is only true as far as these exact terms are concerned; for the inscriptions (אתרא קדישא, ἁγίος τόπος), see S. Fine, 'This Holy Place': On the Sanctity of Synagogues during the Greco-Roman Period (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 97–105. However, in S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society from 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 238, he appears to have revised his position as he writes that the rabbis 'rejected the widespread conception of the local community as a holy place... and of the synagogue as a holy place, both well attested in inscriptions'. This contrast between official and popular religion aligns well with Shinan's view of the Palestinian Targums as works informed by popular beliefs.

³⁹ Poem 43 l. 14 in M. Sokoloff and Y. Yahalom, *שירים ארמיים של יהודי* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999).

⁴⁰ Cf. Eshel and Stone, *לשון הקודש*, p. 173 n. 10.

origin would be); indeed, it is most likely that Hebrew as the Temple language came to carry the connotation of holiness. But it was understood as a 'religious language', demarcated against non-religious use of Hebrew and it did not exclude religious use of non-Hebrew language. That the notion was seized upon in speculative fashion is clear, but these are myths surrounding the primary priority of Hebrew as a religious language. These rabbinic sources, all of which are post-Tannaitic, do not reflect the whole range of opinions, nor do they unequivocally attest to the character of the 'holy tongue'.

2.2 The holy tongue in the Mishna

The Tannaitic use of the term לשון הקודש has a strikingly limited range of subject matter. The vast majority of Tannaitic occurrences relate the notion of 'the holy tongue' to a few specific pericopes in the Tora which require the exclusive use of Hebrew, pitting 'holy tongue' against 'any tongue'. The Mishna does not use the notion anywhere else and only employs the term 'holy tongue' nine times, eight of which appear in a list of tractate Sota; the ninth is related to the *ḥaliṣa* ritual also included in the list of Sota.⁴¹ In the Tosefta the term occurs twice, once in the same context as the Mishna, namely tractate Sota (t. Sot. 7.7), and once to highlight the values of Hebrew by insisting that any father should teach his son the holy tongue (t. Hag. 1.2)—otherwise it would have been better had he not been born into this world (ראוי לו שלא בא לעולם). The 'Tannaitic' Midrashim cover these topics as well and cast their net only slightly wider. They relate that Moses spoke Hebrew on various occasions, which would be stating the obvious were it not for the fact that this observation is once more linked to the Hebrew language requirement for the same specific rituals with which these sources are predominantly concerned.

None of these sources includes any speculation about the linguistic agent of creation, the primordial tongue or the unitary linguistic utopia of the eschaton. Instead, the early rabbis concern themselves with a specific set of rituals, most of which were no longer performed after the destruction of the Second Temple, for which the Hebrew language is either compul-

⁴¹ m. Sot. 7.2, 3 (2x), 4 (2x); 8.1 (2x); 9.1; m. Yev. 12.6.

sory or not. The principal discussion is found in m. Sot. 7, which opens with a list of texts that may be recited in any language (7.1):⁴²

אילו נאמרים בלשונם פרשת סוטה וידידי מעשר וקריית שמע ותפלה וברכת המזון
ושבועת העדות ושבועת הפיקדון

These are said in any language: the pericope of the accused wife [Num. 5.19-22], the confession of the tithe [Deut. 26.13-15], the recital of the Shema, [Deut. 6.4-9], the prayer [Amida], the Grace after Meals, the oath of testimony, and the oath of deposit.

The first three pericopes are biblical, the remaining four are not. Out of all these seven pericopes, only the ritual of the accused wife was an inherently priestly affair. This ritual and the confession of the second tithes are irrelevant to the post-Second Temple period, since the destruction of the Temple ended their performance (m. Sot. 9.9-10). The Shema remained relevant, but its classification attracted controversy as we will shortly see. No such controversy existed with regard to the following four items, which were likewise relevant in Talmudic times.

That these texts were allowed in any language is probably related to the circumstances that they neither involved the recitation of a biblical passage, nor required the involvement of priests, with the notable exception of the *sota* ritual. The Mishna, however, offers no reason or justification for the freedom of language selection, in contrast to the second mishna, which lists a series of biblical pericopes for which the holy tongue is mandatory (7.2):

ואלו נאמרים בלשון הקודש מקרא הביכורים וחליצה ברכות וקללות ברכ[ו]ת כהנים
וברכות כהן גדול ופרשת המלך ופרשת עגלה ערופה ומשוח המלחמה בשעה שהוא מדבר
אל העם

And these are said [only] in the holy tongue: the declaration of the firstfruits [Deut. 26.3-10], the rite of removing the shoe [Deut. 25.7, 9], blessings and curses [Deut. 27.15-26], the blessing of the priests [Num. 6.24-26], the blessing of a high priest [on the Day of Atonement], the pericope of the king [Deut. 17.14-20]; the pericope of the heifer whose neck is to be broken [Deut. 21.7-8], and [the message of] the anointed for battle when he speaks to the people [Deut. 20.2-7].

⁴²For the Mishna, see Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 196–207. Her acute observations are remarkably similar, but not identical, to mine. Part of the differences result from different queries. Whereas Hauptman focuses on the relationship between Mishna and Tosefta, I am primarily interested in the criteria adduced for language differentiation, but the two interests naturally converge in many ways.

The recitation of these biblical passages, introduced by the word מקרא, is restricted to the language in which they were received in the Tora. All these passages belong to priestly rituals that were re-enacted at one point or another, either by the time of their season or, in the case of divorce or the discovery of a murder victim, when the occasion presented itself.

Two passages require some clarification. If the second list reflects re-enacted rituals, the inclusion of the 'blessings and the curses' is out of character, since they were a one-off proclaimed at the time of entering the land of Canaan. They would not be recited other than in the weekly recitation of Scripture which is not the topic of this discussion. The Mishna and especially the Tosefta discuss this pericope in great detail without any suggestion that the ritual was performed at any one time after its first-time occurrence.⁴³ Conceivably, this passage actually belonged to the lists of those passages 'to be recited but not to be translated'—hence to be recited in Hebrew only—in the context of the synagogal recitation of Scripture,⁴⁴ unless Fraade is correct when he argues that the Dead Sea Scrolls do suggest an annual re-enactment,⁴⁵ which would explain their inclusion in this list. The second 'passage' is that of the High Priest's blessings, which are not stipulated by the Tora. These eight blessings were said by the High Priest in the Temple on the Day of Atonement and serve as the conclusion to the recitation of biblical texts. It stands to reason that these, as many other liturgical blessings, had to be recited in Hebrew.⁴⁶

There is no explicit rationale of differentiation between these two mishnaic lists, which are a kind of abstract. Both contain biblical pericopes and post-biblical texts; the fact that a passage is written in the Tora is not decisive for the division into one of these two classes. Their link to the preceding chapters in tractate Sota is tenuous. As a summary statement they relate primarily to what follows, but the nature of this relationship is interesting. Do these summary statements about 'these are said in any language' and 'these are said in the holy tongue' reflect the contents of the following mishnayot? The short answer is: no.⁴⁷

⁴³For an analysis, see Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 109–24.

⁴⁴Such a blurring of contexts, but in reverse, has been attested for the priestly blessing; see Y. Heinemann, *ברכת כהנים ... לא נקראת ולא מיתרגמת*, *Bar-Ilan* 6 (1968), pp. 33–41.

⁴⁵S. Fraade, 'Rhetorics and Hermeneutics in Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah (4QMMT): The Case of the Blessings and the Curses', *DSD* 10 (2003), pp. 150–61.

⁴⁶See the commentary of Ovadya MiBartenura and b. Sot. 40b–41a.

⁴⁷So also Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 198–200.

The mishnayyot following 7.1-2 deal only with items included in the second list (7.2), but with none in the first (7.1):

- 7.3 The declaration of the first fruits (*bikkurim*);
- 7.4 The procedure for dissolving the Levirate obligation (*ḥaliṣa*);
- 7.5 The blessings and curses;
- 7.6 The priestly blessing;
- 7.7 The blessing of the High Priest;
- 7.8 The king's pericope;
- 8.1 The anointed war priest (with 8.2-7 commenting on further stipulations);
- 9.1 The heifer whose neck is to be broken (with further comments in 9.2-8).

The last two are presented in reverse order in the summary statement of 7.2; the Tosefta agrees with the order in 7.2–9.1. The last part of the final chapter of tractate Sota comprises statements about the cancellation of some of these rites, namely that of the heifer (9.9), the tithes (9.10, the only item from the first list that is mentioned again), and of a miscellany of other things (9.10-15). The Mishna displays no particular interest in those passages which may be recited in any language (7.1), makes no attempt to describe these rites in any detail and does not provide any justification for the freedom of language selection.

The impression of incongruity between the summary statements of 7.1-2 and what follows gains strength if we consider several further characteristics of the following mishnayyot. Their focus is inconsistent, despite the fact that they seem to exhibit the same structure: the name of the portion to be read, followed by the question כיצד, 'how so?'. But this question does not carry the same meaning in 7.3-4 and 7.5-8 and it is entirely absent in the last two items, 8.1 and 9.1.⁴⁸ For the first two, מקרא בכורים 'the recitation of the first fruits' (or *bikkurim*) and חליצה (מקרא) '(the recitation of) the act of dissolving the Levirate obligation' (or *ḥaliṣa*), the reason provided for the insistence on Hebrew is text-immanent. See 7.3:

מקרא הבכורים כיצד⁴⁹ וענית ואמרת לפני יי איך ארמי אובד אבי ולהלן הוא אומר
וענו הלוים ואמרו אל כל איש ישראל קול רם מה ענייה אמורה להלן בלשון הקודש ואף
כן בלשון הקודש

'The declaration of the first fruits'—how so? 'And you will answer and say before the LORD thy God: My father was a fugitive Aramaean' (Deut. 26.5). And later on it says, 'And the Levites will answer and say to all the Israelites' (Deut.

⁴⁸ Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 198–200.

⁴⁹ For כיצד Vatrio reads דכת' in its quotation of the mishna at b. Sot. 33a.

27.14). Just as the response in the latter passage is said in the holy tongue, so the response here is said in the holy tongue.

The meaning of this question is: Why is it that *מקרא ביכורים* should be conducted in Hebrew? The explanation seizes upon the analogy of ‘answer and say’ in two passages, taking for granted that the latter passage was recited in Hebrew. In 7.4, the question has the same meaning, ‘why in Hebrew?’ But in 7.5-8 the question *כיצד* means ‘how was it done?’. In these mishnayyot the discussion focuses entirely on the procedure of the rite without any attention to the language used in its performance. See 7.6:

ברכות כהנים כיצד במדינה אומ' אתם שלוש ברכות ובמקדש ברכה אחת במקדש אומ'
את השם ככתובו ובמדינה בכנויו ובמדינה כהנים נשאים את ידיהם כנגד כתפותיהם
ובמקדש על גבי ראשיהם חוץ מכהן גדול שאינו מגביה את ידיו למעלה מן הציץ ר'
יהודה אומ' אף כהן גדול מגביה את ידיו למעלה מן הציץ שנ' וישא אהרן את ידיו אל
העם ויב' וגר'

The blessings of the priests—how so? In the provinces they say it as three blessings, and in the sanctuary, as one blessing. In the sanctuary one says the Name as it is written but in the provinces, with a euphemism. In the provinces the priests raise their hands as high as their shoulders, but in the sanctuary, they raise them over their heads, except for the high priest, who does not raise his hands over the frontlet. R. Yehuda says, Also the high priest raises his hands over the frontlet, as it is said, ‘And Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them’ (Lev. 9.22).

The discussion is all about the performance of the rite without any attention to the choice of language, which is typical for all mishnayyot following 7.4.⁵⁰ It follows that the organizing principle of Sot. 7-9 is not captured by the topical division of 7.1-2 into texts that may be recited in any language and those for which Hebrew is compulsory.⁵¹ Since the first list is passed over in silence, and for six of the eight rituals in the second list no justification for the insistence on Hebrew is offered, it would seem that the rituals were discussed for the detail of their performance. Their language selection is not what links them. On that assumption, the first two mishnayyot which do explain the language requirement may have been added for mnemonic ease, as Judith Hauptman argues,⁵² when these

⁵⁰The *gemara* of b. Sot. 44b recognizes this.

⁵¹Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, p. 201.

⁵²Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 196–207.

priestly blessing wherein neither עֲנִיה וְאִמִּירָה nor כֹּה occurs, leaving this instance entirely unexplained (m. Sot. 7.6). The Mishna does not even alert to this difficulty or to any possible solution—one which was, at some stage, at hand. For R. Yehuda held that the word כֹּה in the priestly blessing signals the holy tongue (or so other sources attest).⁵⁶ This, in turn, led to the blanket statement cited in several Midrashim, the Yerushalmi and the Bavli that ‘in each place where עֲנִיה וְאִמִּירָה כֹּה occur [it must be said] in the holy tongue’.⁵⁷ The criteria have been increased from two over three to four textual triggers. But even this latter rule does not solve each case, because none of these key words occur in the ritual of the anointed war priest (מִשְׁחָה).⁵⁸ Why does the Mishna not deploy this argument for the priestly blessing in m. Sot. 7.6, or mention a solution for the anointed priest in 8.1? Why does it leave out any justification after 7.4?

Too much is left unsaid in these two mishnaic lists and their parallel sources. Choices are inadequately explained or not explained at all, whilst the mishnaic criteria for language selection give the impression of having been added to the lists even though they long stood, having been sealed by tradition. Yet the discussion of the performance of the listed rituals offers important clues about the contemporary rabbinic understanding of the holy tongue, its range of contexts, and impact on the use of vernaculars. To probe the rabbinic reflection on language selection the following sections of this chapter will: (1) briefly chart the justifications for the language selections made, with a focus on the relation between the mishnaic lists and the ongoing rabbinic deliberations; (2) focus on the debate surrounding the language of the Shema, because these debates expose a tendency towards Hebrew exclusivity as well as a dissociation of the Shema from its original socio-historical context; and finally, (3) explore the bilingual context and multiple location of some of these rituals, which belie the dichotomy of the mishnaic lists, and the hieratic context of the Hebrew-only rituals. These sections, 2.3–5, will then be followed by an analysis of the context in which the mishnaic and toseftan lists consolidated (section 2.6). Against the background of these studies, we will be able to appreciate the reasons

⁵⁶ See below, p. 58; b. Sot. 33a–b; 38a; Sifre Num. 39; Num. R. 11.4.

⁵⁷ See Mek. בחודש 9 (p. 238); Sifre Num. 39; Midr. Tan. Deut. 21.7; y. Sot. 7.2, 21c; b. Sot. 33a–b; Leq. T. Exod. 20.19; Qoh. R. 7.8; Num. R. 11.4.

⁵⁸ In Midr. Tan. 20.2 and y. Sot. 8.1, 22b additional markers of the holy tongue are identified for this ritual.

for the editorial shape of the Mishna and to infer conclusions about the value attached to the holy tongue for liturgical and ritual purposes.

2.3 Justifying ritual language

The Mishna only provides criteria for the two rituals in 7.3-4 for which it insists upon the use of Hebrew, but laconically glosses over any proof-text or other evidence for the remaining Hebrew-only rituals, and does not pay any further attention to those rituals which may be said in the vernacular. The Tosefta does not fare much better in this regard, providing a reason for the Shema alone and only because of Rabbi's minority opinion (which disagrees with the Mishna). It is left to the Midrashim and Talmudim to fill in the gaps.

There is something laconic about the way the Mishna presents these two cases, as if submitting an abstract without the paper. That paper exists elsewhere. There are, in fact, numerous justifications of the Hebrew language requirement in other rabbinic sources, but fewer justifications of the freedom of language selection, to the point that we may even construe different hermeneutic approaches on the basis of the arguments presented. All of these discussions are hardly about the choices established in the Mishna and the Tosefta, but rather about the underlying reasons for the selections, or more precisely, about the textual evidence for the choices made. If there is any substance behind the two *mishnayyot* with language arguments in the wider rabbinic reflection on the language selection, the pertinent question is: how does such reflection relate to the Mishna and the Tosefta, in particular to the interest which the Mishnaic and Toseftan redaction had in the language requirements?

The Mishna offers two types of argument in 7.4, one of which it also applied to 7.3. The *mishna* in 7.4 deals with the ritual to release a man from the 'levirate marriage', as stipulated in the Tora for a man who did not wish to marry his childless and widowed sister-in-law. This ritual is known as 'the removal of the shoe' (*ḥaliṣa*). According to all sources, the text prescribed by the Tora had to be spoken in Hebrew, but the justification for this selection of language varies. The Mishna first refers to an analogy, then to a textual marker of language selection, or linguistic permanence:⁵⁹

⁵⁹m. Yev. 12.6; b. Yev. 106b; see the parallel in Sifre Deut. 291 and b. Sot. 33a-b.

חליצה כיצד וענתה ואמרה ככה יעשה לאיש אשר לא יבנה את בית אחיו ולהלן הוא אומ' וענו הלויים וגו'.⁶⁰ מה ענייה אמורה להלן בלשון הקודש ואף כאן בלשון הקודש ר' יהודה אומ' וענתה ואמרה ככה עד שתאמר בלשון הזה

The rite of removing the shoe—how so?

'And she will speak up and say, Thus will be done to the man who will not build his brother's house' (Deut. 25.9). And later on it says, 'And the Levites will speak up and say' (Deut. 27.14). Just as later on speaking is to be in the holy tongue, so here speaking is to be said in the holy tongue.

R. Yehuda says, 'And she will speak up and say thus'—[it is not valid] unless she speaks in this very language.

The analogy of עניה ואמירה 'speaking up and say' between the pericope of the levirate marriage (Deut. 25.9) and the pericope of the blessings and the curses (Deut. 27.14)—like the previous mishna's analogy between the pericope of the first fruits and the Levitical responses—presumes that the latter pericope of the Levitical curses and blessings should be said in the holy tongue without ever explaining why that should be so. The mere analogy of עניה ואמירה with Deut. 27.14 is the most frequently cited argument, but it ultimately shifts the question from the *ḥaliṣa* and *bikkurim* to the Levitical Blessings and Curses. How do we know that the Levites were speaking in the holy tongue in the first place?

This question takes on greater importance when we realize the central position of the analogy of עניה ואמירה. Apart from *ḥaliṣa* and *bikkurim*, the same analogy occurs in the connection with the pericope of the heifer whose neck is to be broken ('*eglah 'arufah*').⁶¹ And whilst based on a different analogy, the importance of the Levitical ritual is reinforced by b. Sot. 38a, which suggests an analogy between the blessings and the curses and the priestly blessing based on a recurrence of the verb 'bless' (תברכו and לברך respectively). Thus the blessings and the curses serve as a proof-text for 4 out of 8 of the Mishna's pericopes. Ignoring the King's pericope and the High Priest's blessings, which are nowhere justified, this leaves only the pericope itself and that of the anointed war priest. The latter passage, however, is indirectly linked to the blessings and the curses, via an analogy with the '*eglah 'arufah*', itself rooted in an analogy with Deut. 27.14. But where is the

⁶⁰ Kaufman A 50 has a scribal error here, reading כילו וגו' where TS E1.96 reads וגו' while Parm3173 omits the phrase.

⁶¹ b. Sot. 44b; cf. Sifre Deut. 210.

evidence for this key-text itself? Three different answers are found, which, I suggest, can be arranged in a logical sequence.

Sifre Deut. 55 argues for a הקש 'analogy' within the pericope itself:⁶² מה קללות בלשון הקודש אף ברכות בלשון הקודש '[pronounced] in the holy tongue, so are the blessings'.⁶³ The midrash takes its cue from the circumstance that the blessings are mentioned but not specified in Deuteronomy, whereas the curses are written out (Deut. 27.15-26). How then is the holy tongue in this analogy, which transfers the language of utterance from one to the other, established for the curses to begin with? Apparently, it goes without saying that the Levites who were to proclaim the curses did so in the holy tongue.⁶⁴ There is substantial reason to assume that this assumption is correct; the power of exact wording inherent in the curse would get in the way of any language other than the original one, while Levites in their priestly role could be assumed to speak the holy tongue. If so, the pericope of the blessings and the curses was in itself made into the cornerstone of the analogies. But this explanation is rooted in extra-textual assumptions, unlike the explicit rabbinic arguments.

A different line of reasoning follows from m. Sot. 7.4 (see above, p. 58), where R. Yehuda does not cite the verbal analogy of עניה ואמירה but the adverb ככה. He points the demonstrative force of the adverb to the speech act: 'R. Yehuda says, "And she will speak up and say thus, ..."—[it is not valid] unless she says precisely these words'. In Biblical Hebrew the retrospective adverb ככה stands at the beginning of a clause:⁶⁵ 'She will speak up and say,

⁶²For the *heqqesh*, see M. Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud* (repr. New York: Bloch, 1968), pp. 152–53: 'the connection of two subjects by a common predicate indicates that they in some respects have a relation to each other'. See esp. A. Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 203 (analogy 2.1): 'Selection and transfer of a substantive feature between two subjects defined as related on the basis of the textual proximity of their biblical representations'.

⁶³The same analogy is made in Midr. Tan. Deut. 21.19; b. Sot. 37b.

⁶⁴We cannot assume that the justification is grounded in another analogy, namely with Exod. 19.19 as in b. Sot. 33a, for which there is no evidence in Sifre Deut. itself. Whether b. Sot. 37b presupposes the analogy put forward at f. 33a, as Rashi assumes, is a matter of reading strategies. Nor can the language selection for the curses depend, for the rabbis, on the very fact that they were written out in Hebrew; this, after all, also applies to many other pericopes.

⁶⁵See B.K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 665–67; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical*

In the foregoing way shall be done to the man...⁶⁶ Moving the reference of the demonstrative adverb 'thus' from the following clause to the preceding one, the exact wording of the text itself becomes the decisive factor for the exclusive use of the holy tongue. The word 'thus' marks the text as one the woman has to say 'exactly so, as it is written in the Tora', namely in the holy tongue.

As a result, no analogy is required. R. Yehuda's interpretation of ככה as an emphatic marker of speech is matched by his emphasis on כה to introduce the priestly blessing (Num. R. 11.4): רבי יהודה אומר אינו צריך הרי (Num. R. 11.4): רבי יהודה אומר אינו צריך הרי 'R. Yehuda says, It is not necessary [to rely on an analogy], for it says: "so" (כה), meaning that they will say it in this language'. Here, too, R. Yehuda's argument stands in contrast to a verbal analogy. Although this Midrash is late, the same argument is implied by Sifre Num. 39 and y. Sot. 7.2, 21c:

תני בשם ר' יודה כל מקום שנ' (במקום) [בלשון] הזה ענייה ואמירה ככה וכה הרי הוא בלשון הקודש

It is taught in the name of R. Yuda, Wherever these expressions occur: 'answer and say', 'thus' and 'so', [the passage] must be [said] in the holy tongue.⁶⁷

Given his recorded opposition to the arguments based on analogies, and the *prima facie* meaning of his summarizing mantra, the mere occurrence of the words עניה ואמירה 'speaking up and saying' is sufficient to trigger the Hebrew language requirement, just like ככה and כה. Decisive would appear to be the mimetic nature of עניה ואמירה: the words require a reply that corresponds to the original utterance, including its language. The antiphonal sense of עניה is in fact as old as biblical psalmody,⁶⁸ although it is a rabbinic innovation to apply the responsive nature to the language of the response. Sifre Deut. 301 expresses the underlying reasoning when it justifies the practice of prompting (וְשִׂאֵינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לִקְרוֹת מִקְרִים אוֹתוֹ) 'and if he does not know how to recite, they recite it to him' in the ritual of the first fruits by understanding the response in an antiphonal sense: סמכו על 'they relied upon the verse, "And

Hebrew (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 1, §102h. In R. Yehuda's interpretation it would introduce speech, as כה in כה בני ישראל.

⁶⁶For three different takes on 'thus shall it be done to the man' in the Mishna, stressing 'thus', 'done' and 'to the man', see Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation*, pp. 312–13, 350.

⁶⁷Quoted after y. Sot. 7.2, 21c. See further the sources cited above, 57 n. 57.

⁶⁸I.W. Slotki, 'Antiphony in Ancient Hebrew Poetry', *JQR* NS 26.3 (1936), pp. 199–219.

you shall respond”, since responding implies prompting to respond by someone else’.⁶⁹ This is, in fact, what even m. Sot. 73 implies: מה ענייה אמורה להלן בלשון הקודש ואף כן בלשון הקודש ‘Just as the response in the latter passage is said in the holy tongue, so the response here is said in the holy tongue’. No analogy is needed; the wording itself implies the holy tongue.

To a considerable extent, we cannot exactly construe R. Yehuda’s argument. He advances three *unique* criteria for three pericopes. If he intended all criteria to be unique, then how did he derive the language selection for the remaining Hebrew-only rituals? If he intended the criteria to be valid for all Hebrew-only pericopes, they would still not have covered the pericope of the anointed war priest. Worse, they would include passages never listed among those to be recited only in the holy tongue.⁷⁰ On both counts the representation of his opinion is found wanting. These problems may suggest that later tradents formalized his arguments and retroactively ascribed the rule to him. An obvious incentive to include his statements would have been the rationale for the language of the priestly blessing (‘so’) which only R. Yehuda could offer.

To overcome the limitations, a third solution builds on R. Yehuda’s approach but also, and in contrast to R. Yehuda, employs the method of verbal analogy (‘keying’).⁷¹ Quoting the mishna on bikkurim, the Bavli expressly voices the question how the language requirement for this ritual is established (b. Sot. 33a):

ולוים גופייהו מנלן אתיא קול קול ממשה כתיב הכא קול רם וכתיב התם משה ידבר והאלהים יענו בקול מה להלן בלשון הקודש אף כאן בלשון הקודש

As for the Levites themselves, from where [do we derive that it must be said in the holy tongue]? It is derived from the analogous use of the word ‘voice’ in connection with Moses. Here it is written ‘with a loud voice’ (Deut. 27.14), and elsewhere it is written, ‘Moses spoke and God answered him by a voice’ (Exod. 19.19); as in the latter passage it was in the holy tongue, so also in the other passage it means in the holy tongue.

The final link in the chain is an analogy between Deut. 27.14 and Exod. 19.19, *משה ידבר והאלהים יענו בקול* ‘Moses would speak and God would

⁶⁹For prompting in this ritual, see also m. Bik. 3.7. The same proof-text which Sifre employs is provided in y. Bik. 3.7, 65d; cf. Midr. Tan. Deut. 21.7.

⁷⁰For more passages containing *אמירה עניה*, see below, p. 96. Cf. p. 57 n. 57 above.

⁷¹For ‘keying’, see Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation*, pp. 214–25.

reply with a voice'.⁷² Moses' speaking corresponds to God's response with a 'voice'. The use of קול, redundant in Exod. 19.19 when interpreted as 'voice' rather than 'thunder', hence 'free' to interpret (מופנה),⁷³ is understood to indicate Hebrew and more particularly the correspondence of language between Moses' address to God and God's reply. This correspondence, then, becomes the blueprint for the mimesis of language that underlies the verbal analogy of ענייה ואמירה. As a consequence, the language requirement for all these rituals is based on the language situation of the levitical blessings and curses, which in turn is rooted in the Sinai Theophany.

The blend of these distinct approaches is already attested in the Yerushalmi (y. Sot. 7.2, 21c). Here, the verbal analogy with Exod. 19.19 is the main principle behind the mishnaic selection of pericopes, combined with R. Yehuda's blanket statement that any passage where 'speaking up, saying, so thus' occurs must be recited in the holy tongue. All of them are 'constructed as a family' (בניין אב), derived from the mimetic interpretation of Exod. 19.19.⁷⁴ But the Yerushalmi continues with a sustained challenge on the mimetic nature of ענייה ואמירה:

התיב ר' חגי והכת' ויען לבן ובתואל אין תימר על ידי ענייה והכת' ויאמרו אין תימר על ידי אמירה והכת' מי' יצא הדבר אין תימר בלשון הקודש והכת' ויקרא לו לבן יגר-שהדוּתא ואין תימר קודם למתן תורה הרי פרשת ויידוי מעשר הרי הוא לאחר מתן תורה והוא נאמ' בכל לשון ר' שמואל בר נחמן בשם ר' יוחנן שלא יהא לשון סורסי קל בעיניך שבתורה ובנביאים ובכתובים הוא א(ו)מור

R. Haggai objected, But is it not written, 'Then Laban and Bethuel spoke up [and said]'⁷⁵ (Gen. 24.50)?

If you say [it is different here] because of 'answering', has it not also been written, 'And they said' (Gen. 24.50)?

If you say [it is different here] because of 'saying', has it not been written, 'The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good' (Gen. 24.50)?

And if you say that, indeed, all of this was said in the holy tongue, and is it not written, 'And Laban called the place, Yegar-sahadutha' (Gen. 31.47)?

And if you explain that that was because it was prior to the giving of the Tora, look here, the pericope of the confession for tithe surely followed the giving of the Tora but it may be said in any language at all.

⁷² For the same proof-text and analogy, see Midr. Tan. 21.7; b. Sot. 42a. Cf. y. Sot. 8.1, 22b.

⁷³ See b. Ber. 45a for another interpretation of the apparent superfluity of בקול; cf. Mek. בחודש 4 (edn Horowitz-Rabin, p. 216; edn Lauerbach, p. 223).

⁷⁴ For בניין אב, cf. Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation*, p. 229.

⁷⁵ The quoted verse continues with the crucial verb ויאמרו.

R. Shmuel b. Naḥman in the name of R. Yoḥanan, Let the Aramaic language not be cheap in your eyes! For in the Tora, Prophets and Writings, that language is to be found.

R. Ḥaggai reveals the fallacy of the argument that עניה ואמירה point to the use of the holy tongue, since the same syntagma occurs in Gen. 24.50 where it applies to Laban and Bethuel, who were both Aramaeans and would accordingly be understood to have spoken Aramaic rather than Hebrew.⁷⁶ The verbal analogy runs to ground on this passage.

To underscore the flaw of the argument, R. Ḥaggai, or perhaps the anonymous voice, pre-emptively refutes four possible attempts to save the mimetic nature of עניה ואמירה. All these four hypothetical conjectures seek to remove Gen. 24.50 from the equation. The first one questions the validity of the analogy with ‘answering’, ויען. It suggests that Laban and Bethuel ‘answer’ the question of Abraham’s servant, Eliezer, in Gen. 24.49 so that עניה must be taken literally as a reply instead of ‘speaking up’. If true, this use of the verb would break up the expression עניה ואמירה and thereby disqualify Gen. 24.50 from the generative analogy—hence save the rule. This interpretation is quickly dismissed by pointing out that the full expression is in fact used.

The second conjecture targets the analogy with ‘saying’, which, judging by the refutation, indicates that the contents of Laban and Bethuel’s speech renders the analogy invalid. What could have been wrong with it? Their words are: ‘The matter comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good’. In view of the fact that Laban’s image in rabbinic literature is notoriously negative and both Laban and Bethuel are accused of attempting to prevent the marriage between Rebekah and Isaac,⁷⁷ this objection seeks to disqualify the speech of Laban and Bethuel by hinting at their unspoken intentions. Whatever the objection, R. Ḥaggai points out that all that Laban and Bethuel said had been determined by God rather than originating with them; their words represent an act of response: ‘The matter comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good’.⁷⁸

The third attempt to maintain the verbal analogy implies that Laban availed himself of the holy tongue, that is Hebrew rather than Aramaic.

⁷⁶ Gen 25.20; 28.5; 31.20, 24; Deut. 26.5.

⁷⁷ See K.H. Zetterholm, *Portrait of a Villain: Laban the Aramean in Rabbinic Literature* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion, 2; Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

⁷⁸ It is inferred from Gen. 24.50 that God arranges marriages: b. M. Qat. 18b.

However, citing the name Laban gave to a certain place (Yegar-sahadutha) proves that he spoke Aramaic and thus gives the lie to that claim. The final attempt to salvage the argument is of a chronological nature, claiming that the holy tongue would not have been imperative before Israel received the Tora. This objection is given equally short shrift, since the confession of the second tithes, which postdates the giving of the Tora, may be declared in any language.

This strong challenge to the verbal analogy of עניה ואמירה takes a sudden twist when R. Shmuel b. Nahman emphasizes the positive value of Aramaic.⁷⁹ Before the Yerushalmi resumes the discussion of the Mishna, it substantiates the claim that Aramaic occurs in each of the major parts of the Hebrew Bible,⁸⁰ followed by a saying that accords respect to Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Hebrew before ending on the notion that the Israelites selected Hebrew as a language and Aramaic as a script.⁸¹ It follows that R. Shmuel b. Nahman accepts R. Haggai's inference from Gen. 24:50 that עניה ואמירה does not refer to Hebrew but to Aramaic, at least in the editorial flow of the narrative, but in contrast to R. Haggai he draws a positive conclusion about the importance of Aramaic. This conclusion is reinforced by the reference to the four 'appropriate' languages that are used in the world.

Arguably, this editorial reasoning turns the tables on R. Haggai. Has the analogy been invalidated? Although in practice the analogy of עניה ואמירה boils down to an insistence on Hebrew, it functions strictly speaking to prohibit a change of language into any desirable vernacular. If Laban and Bethuel spoke Aramaic, and if Aramaic should not be considered lightly but may be used appropriately for certain purposes—and marriage certainly ranked among these purposes—the analogy has not been proved wrong.

Ultimately, it is not beyond doubt whether the Yerushalmi maintains the analogy. Its final word on the subject suggests yet another solution for the Hebrew language requirement: כתיב וענו הלוים ואמרו אל כל איש: 'It is written, "And the Levites will speak up and say to each man in Israel with a loud voice" (Deut. 27:14)—with the voice of the Highest. This teaches that the

⁷⁹In the parallel of Gen. R. 74.14: 'because God paid honour to it'.

⁸⁰Gen. 31.47; Jer. 10.11; Dan. 2.4.

⁸¹For this passage in the Yerushalmi, see p. 271 below.

Holy One blessed be He shared his voice with them.’ If God adds His voice to that of the Levites—and God, naturally, speaks the holy tongue—it follows that the Levites must speak the holy tongue as well. This argument closely resembles that of the analogy with Exod. 19.19, where בקול was deemed *mufneh* and an indication that God replied to Moses in Hebrew, but this time no analogy is necessary, since the language requirement for the Levites is deduced from the wording of the verse itself.

When all is said and done, both the Talmudim have all their bases covered, but what exactly has been achieved? Despite the laboured and hybrid approach to justify the mishnaic list, the results were never in doubt. The entire hermeneutic process is an exercise in how to draw foregone conclusions, with doubts about the arguments employed that are never quite put to rest in the Yerushalmi. That the results already stood is best illustrated by the rejection of those arguments for rite A which would contradict the accepted results for rite B, without ever questioning the result for rite B.⁸² It would be easy to provide further examples of the rabbinic awareness of the weakness of some of the crucial analogies, but the point is clear: the justifications are post-factum. The secondary nature of these arguments did not make them less valid in rabbinic eyes; but while the attempt to root the decisions in text-immanent markers must have seemed self-evident, the observation that it was post-factum is relevant from a historical point of view. If the Mishna summarily hints at a fuller discussion without going into detail, that is understandable because the detail would only be unfolded during and after the Mishna’s redaction in the Amoraic period.

The secondary nature of the prooftexts has ramifications for our understanding of the rabbinic emphasis on the holy tongue. On the one hand the holy tongue was uniquely connected with a set of specific rites which must be taken into account to explain the historical domain of the notion ‘holy tongue’. This surprisingly restricted domain points in the direction of a ritual language as the origin of the notion, which the following sections will explore in further detail. On the other hand the arguments provided have an ad-hoc nature and only gradually developed into something resembling a closed system. It was clear to the rabbis that the reasons for each of the rites’ language selections could be found in the

⁸² See y. Sot. 7.2, 21C; 8.1, 22b.

Tora. To identify the historical reason behind the language selections for the listed rituals we must look beyond the text-immanent triggers.

By the same token, the justifications reveal a new shade to the rabbinic views of language, a shade important enough for the editors of the Mishna to reference. New reasons for language selection imply new motivations, which I will explore in the following sections. Furthermore, the justifications shift the balance towards the holy tongue. It is significant that the remaining rites for which any language will do receive no substantial attention for the language of their performance—with the exception of the Shema, if only because Rabbi and others deemed nothing but Hebrew suitable, and the Amida, which stood to become a Hebrew-only ritual. The two mishnaic lists of rituals already display a preponderance of argument for the exclusivity of Hebrew. The language selection of the rituals said in any language is for the most part taken for granted. That the discussions on textual markers of Hebrew exclusivity preponderate signals the language's changing status.

The changing tenor of rabbinic thought will be illustrated with the shifting language requirement for the Shema, which will highlight a novelty of interpretation and simultaneously lead us to the socio-historical context of the rites for the issue of their language.

2.4 Reciting the Shema

The recitation of the Shema, 'Hear, O Israel', became a highlight of Jewish daily prayer and formed part of the daily morning liturgy in the Temple (m. Tam. 5.1). Its early liturgical use is evidenced by the Nash Papyrus, dating from the second century BCE. Indeed the Shema seems to have been adopted in the daily morning and evening prayers from an early period onward, where it did not necessitate the presence of priests. However important the locale of the Shema may have been, and I will return to this issue in the next section, it is glossed over in rabbinic appreciations of the recitation. Instead, the debate focused on two other questions: whether reciting the Shema is a scriptural command (b. Ber. 21a) and whether it was permitted to recite it in any language. According to the Tosefta, Rabbi challenged the tradition that the Shema may be recited in any language (t. Sot. 7.7):

ברכות הלל ושמע ותפלה נאמרין בכל לשון ר' אומ' אומ' אני שאין שמע נאמ' אלא בלשון הקדש שנ' והיו הדברים האלה

Blessings, Hallel, Shema and Amida are said in any language.

Rabbi says, I say that the Shema may only be recited in the holy tongue, as it is said, 'These are the words' (Deut. 6.6).

In Rabbi's interpretation of the biblical text, the emphasis falls on the first Hebrew word, והיו 'are', which inherits its volitional aspect from the imperative 'Hear O Israel' in 6.4. Accordingly, the proper translation is not 'These are the words', but 'These words must be (on your heart)'. In Rabbi's reading, the volitional aspect fixes these words as they are, and since they are written in Hebrew they should remain Hebrew in recitation. Similar arguments of unchangeability on the basis of the verb היה occur elsewhere in rabbinic literature with regard to tefillin and mezuzot which must be written in Hebrew (b. Meg. 8b).

Although the introduction 'I say' in the Tosefta bears the hallmarks of Rabbi's authority, the Mishna does not record his opinion and its reception in other sources is illuminating for the arguments used in these deliberations about language requirements. The Yerushalmi shows a rather mixed reception, as illustrated by the story about R. Levi bar Ḥayta who heard Jews in Caesarea reading the Shema in Greek, and 'wanted to stop them from doing so' in keeping with Rabbi's view (y. Sot. 7.1, 21b).

וקרית שמע דכת' ודברת בס' ר' או' אומר אני קרית שמע אינו נאמ' אלא בלשון הקודש מה טע' והיו הדברים האלה ר' לוי בר חיתה אזל לקיסרין שמע קלון קריין שמע אלוניסיתין בעא מעכבתון שמע ר' יוסי ואיקפד אמ' כך או' אני מי שאינו יודע לקרות אשורית לא יקרינה כל עיקר אלא יוצא בכל לשון שהוא יודע השיב ר' ברכיה הרי מגילת אסתר היה יודע לקרותה אשורית ולעז אינו יוצא בה אלא אשורית אמ' ר' מנא מגילת אסתר היה יודע לקרותה אשורית ולעז אינו יוצא אלא אשורית בלעז יוצא בה בלעז וכן יוצא בה בכל לשון שהוא יודע

The recitation of the Shema [may be said in any language], as it is written, 'And you shall speak of them' (Deut. 6.7).

Rabbi says, I say, The recitation of the Shema is said only in the holy tongue. What is the scriptural basis for that view? 'And these are the words which I command you' (Deut. 6.6)

R. Levi bar Ḥayta went to Caesarea. He heard them read the Shema in Greek. He wanted to stop them from doing so. R. Yose heard and was angered. He said, Should I say, one who does not know how to read them in Hebrew [אשורית] should not read them at all? Rather he fulfils his obligation in any language which he knows.

R. Berekhya replied, Well now, as for the scroll of Esther, if one knew how to read it in Hebrew or in a foreign language [לעז],⁸³ he carries out his obligation to read it only in Hebrew.

[However.] R. Mana said, As for the scroll of Esther, if one knew how to read it in Hebrew and in a foreign language, he fulfils his obligation to read it only in Hebrew. In a foreign language [only], he fulfils his obligation to read it in a foreign language. But here [= in the case of the Shema] one carries out his obligation to read it in any language which one knows.

In the Yerushalmi's narrative, R. Yose angrily retorted that the Shema may be recited 'in any language which one knows' lest people would not recite it at all.

But the story does not end here, for later generations addressed the same issue. Tellingly, the Yerushalmi appends a qualification of the permissive position from a discussion concerning the scroll of Esther, which must be recited at the Festival of Purim. In this latter discussion, R. Berekhya maintains that someone who knows both Hebrew and another vernacular can only fulfil his obligation in Hebrew. Whether or not R. Berekhya intended to address the recitation of the Shema in analogy to that of the Book of Esther, of which the latter is recited from a written text and the former by heart, is largely irrelevant, since the editor links both recitations and thereby transfers the priority of Hebrew from the laws surrounding the reading of Esther to the language selection of the Shema. As the text stands, the two issues of the language of Esther and that of the Shema become linked.

His contemporary, R. Mana, fills in the gap which R. Berekhya leaves open: what if someone does not know Hebrew (here 'Ashurit', the term used in connection with Esther)? Where R. Berekhya is apparently unwilling to address that situation, R. Mana maintains that 'any language' will do. He upholds the analogy between reading the scroll of Esther and saying the Shema, and the priority of Hebrew if someone actually knows Hebrew, but he transfers the validity of non-Hebrew vernaculars where Hebrew is not a viable option between these rituals. As a consequence of his modification, Rabbi's opinion, that Hebrew be used, is accommodated as the preferred

⁸³For this translation, see p. 34 n. 77 above. At the halakhic level, the open meaning of the expression 'foreign language' is important as a principle, although in this context, under reference to אֶלְתִּי־סֵתִין, it undoubtedly implied Greek.

option by analogy with the recitation of the scroll of Esther during the festival of Purim, with the older opinion justified as the lowest threshold.

The anonymous opinion in the Yerushalmi is noteworthy for its choice of proof-text, 'And you shall speak of them (Deut. 6.7)'. Why the element of speech evokes a language that those who pray would understand is not entirely clear, unless **בם** in **וידברת בם** is understood as speaking 'with them' and the phrase seen as analogue to the proof-text R. Yoshiya used in connection with the suspected woman, **ת"ל ואמר אל האשה בכל לשון שהיא**, 'Scripture tells us, "He told the woman", in any language which she understands' (see p. 74 below). But the unit lays more emphasis on the notion of 'knowing' a language to use it, rather than 'understanding' it. This specific argument has no parallels outside the Yerushalmi.

The Babylonian Talmud, on the other hand, offers an argument to undercut the opinion that any language be allowed. The anonymous voice redefines the meaning of **שמע** from hearing in the sense of understanding, to hearing in the sense of vocal volume: if you pray the Shema, you should at least hear your own words, thus audibly pronounce the Shema.⁸⁴ Sifre Deut. 31 follows suit: **שמע ישראל** מיכן אמרו הקורא קריית שמע ולא השמיע **לאזנו לא יצא**, "[Hear Israel]", on this basis they said, Who recites the Shema but does not hear it with his own ears, has not fulfilled his obligation'. This midrash takes sides with Rabbi (b. Ber. 13a), R. Yose (m. Ber. 2.3) or R. Eleazar b. Azarya (b. Ber. 15b) in taking 'hear' literally, thereby precluding the interpretation that someone should understand the Shema for it to be meaningful. This discussion was not settled when the Mishna was redacted, but eventually the multilingual approach was to lose out. In the literal approach, any reference to understanding, hence to vernaculars, is unnecessary. This style of anonymous discussion is typical for the late editorial layer in the Bavli, commonly attributed to the *stammaim*, and it does not end with any obvious decision in favour of either alternative.⁸⁵ The discussion of the *sota* made clear that hearing was tantamount to understanding, and understanding implied linguistic ability.⁸⁶

⁸⁴b. Sot. 32b–33a; cf. b. Ber. 13a and b. Meg. 17a–18a; Sifre Deut. 31.

⁸⁵A proof based on 'hear' is advanced elsewhere, too; in b. Sot. 33a, the reason that the oath of testimony may be uttered in whatever language one understands is based on Lev. 5.1: "And if any one sin, in that he hears the voice of adjuration" (Lev. 5.1) — in whatever language he hears it'.

⁸⁶With reference to the oath of testimony and the suspected woman, see the argument based on **שמע** in y. Sot. 7.1, 21b; b. Sot. 32b–33a; Sifre Num. 12.

The Bavli may not settle for a permanent conclusion, but the discussions expose a tendency towards Hebrew exclusivity. The Yerushalmi approximates a decision with its harmony of both positions, derived from an analogy with reading the Book of Esther: if one can read Hebrew, the holy tongue is mandatory, but if not, any language is permitted. Sifre and the Bavli offer an important argument that would eventually win the day for Hebrew by changing the primary predication of שמע from cognitive understanding to aural reception.

What makes the change from understanding to hearing the Shema possible is the typical rabbinic move from socio-historical context to textual triggers for the selection of performative language. There is, of course, nothing unusual in rabbinic hermeneutics to ignore history and favour textuality—a textuality which remains firmly anchored in the ongoing discourse. But to put matters in perspective we may explore the original context of the rite and its language of performance, not to deny the rabbinic interpretation its legitimacy but to more fully understand the changes in practice and thought. We may ask at this point why Rabbi, R. Yose and R. Eleazar b. Azarya maintained the Hebrew language requirement over and against tradition and a sizeable number of their peers and how they, or their position, could ever succeed (as happened in the long run) if multilingual recitation had become the norm for their contemporaries and the mishna allows any language?

The socio-historical context of Shema-recitation explains the existence of two positions which did not exclude one another, because the historical locale of the Shema was twofold: within and without the Temple, with and without priests. Reciting the Shema formed part of both the daily morning liturgy in the Temple, as recited by the priests and the daily individual prayer, where it did not necessitate the presence of priests. The priests who recited the Shema in the Temple as part of the morning sacrifice almost certainly used Hebrew, whereas the situation may well have been very different outside the Temple precincts for individual Jews who recited the Shema but more often than not would not have been able to do so in Hebrew. This would have created the situation that the Shema was recited in Hebrew in the Temple and in any language elsewhere, with Hebrew quite possibly the default choice even without a hieratic context. By the same token, this differentiation of locale explains how the different views could have come about as equally valid possibilities. Rabbi may well

have addressed the recitation of the Shema by the priests in the Temple, whereas the view that any language is permitted concerns the recitation by non-priests. Such variations are not transparent in the rigid listings of the Mishna, but may help explain the differences of opinion about its proper language in recitation and how Rabbi could take a radically different view on the language of the Shema from sages. The straitjacket of the mishnaic lists passes over the distinction of context and silences the importance of hieratic involvement for the languages of the rite, but this context sheds light on the different positions outlined above.

In truth, however, the historical explanation of two different locales fails to answer the question why the positions were played out against one another as if on a level playing field. We should not forget the consistent rabbinic decision to ignore context and to focus on timeless texts, in this case textual indications of the language to be used, which is entirely in keeping with rabbinic discourse in general. Their silencing of the historical context has relevance beyond the socio-historical origin of the Shema and provides another answer to the question of how and why the insistence upon using Hebrew for the daily prayer of the Shema came about. This question will be addressed more explicitly in section 2.7 below. First, I will focus more closely on the influence and role of context and locale in language selection to show the importance of context but simultaneously its obliteration in the mishnaic lists.

2.5 Context and language selection

The Shema is not the only rite for which context was more important than the mishnaic lists betray. The binary approach in the mishnaic (and toseftan) lists cannot do justice to the actual reality of two rituals, the ritual of the woman suspected of adultery, and that of the anointed priest who addresses the troops before battle commences. The discussion of these rites will finally lead us to the hieratic context of the Hebrew-only rites.

In m. Sot. 2.3 the Mishna describes in detail how the *פרשת סוטה*, the pericope of the accused woman (Num. 5.19-22) was written down by the priest. He would, naturally, omit those parts of the pericope which tell him what to do, or her what to say. The writing material is discussed, and other details, but the reading of the pericope receives no mention until chapter 7, when the pericope is laconically included in a list of texts that may be

recited in any language. Thus the Mishna does not shed any light on one important detail of the procedure: how did the priest read and explain the pericope to the woman? Did he say it in the vernacular, after writing it in Hebrew? Following the Tosefta, the priest read out the text he wrote on the scroll before explaining to her what goes on (t. Sot. 2.1):

יוצא ועומד בצד סוטה קורא ודורש ומדקדק כל דקדוקי פרשה ומשמיעה בכל לשון
ששומעת כדי שתהא יודעת על מה היתה שותה

He goes out and stands by the accused wife. He reads [the text of the scroll] aloud and explains it and spells out every detail of the pericope. And he makes her understand it in any language she understands so that she knows what she is drinking.

Although no indication is given about the language in which the priest would write down the pericope on the scroll, the original language, Hebrew, is the obvious and unmarked choice.⁸⁷ He copied the pericope from the text which Queen Helene had inscribed on a golden flagstone (m. Yom. 3.10), which was, whether in abbreviated form or not, assumed to be Hebrew (y. Sot. 2.2, 18a). The question whether the scroll defiles the hands assumes a Hebrew text (y. Sot. 2.4, 18a). The written text fulfils a ritual function itself, by being blotted by the bitter waters, circumstances under which the text mattered in every detail, comparable to *mezuzot* and *tefillin* for which no other language was allowed (m. Meg. 1.8). He explains to her that his copy is accurate.⁸⁸ But what about the spoken language? The Mishna does not specify whether the priest first read the pericope in Hebrew, then interpreted it in the woman's vernacular, or translated the Hebrew immediately in her vernacular. The last option is what the Mishna's wording would seem to suggest, but we cannot be certain.

The Tosefta offers a different picture. The priest does not read out the pericope in whatever language the woman understands, only its explanation. It follows that the Tosefta assumes recitation in Hebrew followed by an oral interpretation; if so, the passage may not be read in any language. This conclusion chimes with the omission of this pericope among the passages that may be said in any language according to t. Sot. 7.7: 'Blessings,

⁸⁷ Cf. m. Sot. 2.3-4, which describes how he wrote the text on a scroll.

⁸⁸ See y. Yom. 3.10(8), 41a and y. Sot. 2.2, 18a.

Hallel, Shema and Amida are said in any language'; the *sota* ritual does not figure in this list.⁸⁹

The discussion in the Yerushalmi is slightly more suggestive of a translation (y. Sot. 2.2, 18a; par. y. Yom. 3.10(8), 41a):

תני רבי הושעיה כל פרשת סוטה היתה כתובה עליה שממנה היה קורא ומתרגם כל
דיקדוקי הפרשה

R. Hoshaya taught: The whole pericope of the *sota* was written on it, because [the priest] read from it and interpreted all the details of the pericope.

Although the verb *ומתרגם* implies both 'translation' (in the sense of a shift of language) and 'interpretation' (in the sense of explanation), the Yerushalmi only has a few places where the verb *תרגם* does not refer to a translation, in contrast to the Bavli where the non-translation is dominant.⁹⁰ Does *כל דיקדוקי הפרשה ומתרגם* mean exactly the same as the parallel *כל דקדוקי פרשה ומדקדק* in the Tosefta?⁹¹ Whether or not *דורש ומדקדק* is a hendiadys, which the Yerushalmi captures in one word, *ומתרגם*, the detailed explanation must have included translation of at least the essentials to render the procedure valid. The whole procedure is reminiscent of Ezra's public reading of the Tora, which, as the rabbis saw it, was followed by both translation and explanation,⁹² while in this ritual the priest would write and read the pericope to the accused woman in Hebrew (at least in the Tosefta's version), and then explain text and procedure to her in her own vernacular. But the Tosefta does not refer to an oral-performative translation.

In the Yerushalmi, the issue of language selection is taken up again in y. Sot. 7.1, 21b:

כת' ואמר (ל)ה[כהן] לאשה בכל לשון שהיא שומעת דברי ר' יאשיה אמ' ליה ר' יונתן
ואם אינה שומעת ולמה היא עונה אחריו אמן אלא שלא יאמר לה על ידי תורגמן
It is written, 'And the priest shall say to the woman' (Num. 5.21), In any language which she understands, the words of R. Yoshiya.

R. Yonatan said to him, If she does not understand, then why should she say

⁸⁹Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, argues that the Tosefta presupposes 'any language', but does not mention the three variables: the language of the written text, the language of reading out the pericope, and the language of instruction.

⁹⁰For details, see Ch. Four, section 4.2 below.

⁹¹For a link between *דורש* and translation, see m. Sheq. 5.1: שהוא פותיח דברים ודורשן ויודיע בשבעים לשון.

⁹²t. San. 4.7(5); Gen. R. 36.8; y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b; 4.1, 74d; b. San. 21b–22a; b. Ned. 37b.

after him, 'Amen'? But [the meaning of the verse just now cited is] that he should not speak to her through an interpreter.

R. Yonatan's response to R. Yoshiya does not challenge the use of a vernacular, but his prooftext. In his interpretation, the verse 'and the priest shall say to the woman' precludes the use of an intermediate as interpreter, which agrees with the usual legal restrictions. Any suspect or witness in a legal suit had to be addressed in his or her own language.⁹³ Both R. Yoshiya and R. Yonatan accept this, but the former understands the use of 'say' in Num. 5.21 as a reference to her vernacular whereas the latter derives her understanding from her confirmation, 'Amen'.

Behind this exchange looms the distinctive approach of the R. Ishmael Midrashim, which does not accept the derivation of the same legal ruling from two distinct verses.⁹⁴ The interpretative formula *אינו צריך* 'the [text] does not require [this interpretation]', which characterizes this hermeneutic method, is wanting in the Yerushalmi, but occurs in the parallel of Sifre Num. 12. Thus the disagreement between these two rabbis concerns the prooftext, not the procedure followed by the priest. But which procedure do they have in mind—exactly what does the priest say when he uses the woman's vernacular? In R. Yoshiya's version, it would seem that 'say' signals the oral-performative translation (just as Onqelos 'said' his translation) from the written Hebrew text of the pericope itself, which would not contradict R. Yonatan's conclusion, that the priest should not use an interpreter, hence address the woman himself in her own language. The more detailed challenge in the parallel of Sifre, where R. Yoshiya based his interpretation on Num. 5.19 rather than 5.21,⁹⁵ helps to clarify how R. Yonatan relates 'say' to the priest's instruction (Sifre Num. 12):

ואמר אל האשה בכל לשון שהיא שומעת דב' ר' יאשיה שהיה בדיון מה אם יבמה קלה לא עשה בה כל הלשונות כלשון הקודש סוטה חמורה אינו דין שנעשה⁹⁶ בה כל הלשונות כלשון הקודש ת"ל ואמר אל האש' בכל לשון שהיא שומעת דב' ר' יאשיה ר' ישמעל או' אינו צריך שהרי כבר נא' ואמ' האשה אמן אמן אם אינה שומעת כיצד היא

⁹³m. Mak. 1.9; t. San. 7.7; b. Mak. 6b; b. San. 17a; b. Men. 65a; y. Yev. 16.7, 16a; Lev. R. 9.34; y. Ned. 10.10(8), 42a; Sifre Deut. 188. Note, however, the opposite opinion in Num. R. 9.34.

⁹⁴Yadin, *Scripture as Logos*, pp. 68–69.

⁹⁵It seems likely that both 5.19 and 5.21 played a part, at least in the eyes of R. Yonatan: one of the terms is redundant, which renders one verse free for interpretation.

⁹⁶Note the instructive comments by M.I. Kahana, *מהדורה מבוארת*, 3 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2011, II, pp. 139–40 n. 7, on the negations at this point.

אומ' אמן אמן או אינו⁹⁷ או' אל' אלה כשהוא או' יתן יי' אותך לאלה ולשבועה הרי שבועה אמורה הא מה ת"ל ואמר הכ' אל אשה לימדה כהן סדר שבועה 'And he will say to the woman' (Num. 5.19)—in any language that she understands. The words of R. Yoshiya. Does it not follow from the more lenient instance of a sister-in-law [*ḥaliṣa*] in which one does not equate all languages with the holy tongue [that one would even less do so in the more severe instance of a *sota*]? Therefore [Scripture] tells us, 'And he will say to the woman' (Num. 5.19)—in any languages that she understands. The words of R. Yoshiya.

R. Ishmael says, The text does not require [this interpretation], since it has already been said: 'And the woman will reply, Amen Amen' (Num. 5.22). If she did not understand, how did she [confirm and] say 'Amen Amen'? Or did he only say the curse [to the woman]? As it says, 'The LORD may make you a curse and oath among your people' (5.21), here the oath is mentioned. Now, what does Scripture teach us with 'and the priest said to the woman' (5.21)? The priest taught her the order of the oath.

This version combines the teaching of R. Yoshiya, who debated this with R. Yonatan according to the Yerushalmi, with a teaching of the earlier Tanna R. Ishmael on Num. 5.21 (rather than 5.19).⁹⁸ For R. Ishmael, the double use of 'Amen' is required, because he understands the woman's double confirmation as addressing both the curse and the oath. She has to understand both; even though the curse works of its own accord (usually assuming Hebrew), her understanding is essential for the legitimacy of the procedure. Likewise, she should understand the oath for it to become legally valid (as for several oaths discussed in t. Sot. 7.1-2).

In this version, R. Ishmael's challenge does not refer to an interpreter as the additional derivation from the word 'say', but to the priest's instruction, teaching the woman what her oath is all about. He does not translate, but 'teach'. This conclusion is not at odds with R. Yonatan's inference in the Yerushalmi, which claims that he should not use an interpreter, but in R. Ishmael's wording the priest may not use an interpreter for the legal instruction of the woman, rather than for the translation of the pericope. Since both R. Yonatan and R. Ishmael agree with R. Yoshiya that, in contrast to the ritual of the *ḥaliṣa*, the accused woman (*sota*) should understand her oath by the use of languages other than the holy tongue—which is a

⁹⁷Note the alternative readings with אינה in Kahana, ספרי במדבר, I, p. 40.

⁹⁸Kahana, ספרי במדבר, II, pp. 139-40.

different proposition from the priest's unmediated instruction, otherwise the restriction of *אינו צריך* would apply—R. Yonatan apparently agrees that the pericope may be recited in any language. All reject the *qal waḥomer* argument, which would make Hebrew a prerequisite. They accept the use of the woman's vernacular, but R. Ishmael and R. Yonatan assume that the priest addresses the woman in her own language in two distinct activities: in his translation of the pericope and in his instruction of the procedural details.

Thus the priest copies the text from the golden flagstone while he has the parchment in his hand; he stands by the woman, then reads out the text to her. Since he reads (קורא) the text written in Hebrew, the Tosefta would seem to suggest that he recites the pericope in Hebrew. But does he subsequently translate the pericope? In the instruction that follows reading, he 'makes her understand it in any language she understands'. The ambiguity of the Tosefta is revealing: no value is placed on the translation of the pericope, as long as the accused woman understands the procedure.

A different picture emerges from the Yerushalmi and Sifre Num. The exchanges between R. Yoshiya/R. Yonatan and R. Yoshiya/R. Ishmael suggest that the priest translated the pericope. Whether he first recited the pericope in Hebrew remains unclear, although R. Hoshaya (y. Sot. 2.2, 18a) claims that the priest read from the written scroll. The *qal waḥomer* argument, contrasting the procedure of *ḥaliṣa* with that of the *sota*, would seem to suggest that Hebrew recitation was not a prerequisite for the proper execution of the ritual. Or more precisely, it was incumbent upon the priest to 'say' the pericope to the accused woman in her own vernacular. That leaves the issue of his 'reading' open: no value is placed on recitation in the holy tongue (even if they thought it constituted a regular part of the procedure).

The Mishna simply states that the pericope was said in whatever language the woman in question would understand. There is, accordingly, no discussion of the need for understanding of the pericope. The Mishna's position, followed by the Bavli, neither excludes nor implies a prior reading in Hebrew.⁹⁹ Conversely, the Tosefta neither excludes or implies

⁹⁹b. Sot. 32b: 'Whence have we it that the section concerning the suspected woman [may be recited in any language]? As it is written, "And the priest shall say (אמר) unto the woman" (Num. 5.21)—in whatever language he speaks'. Note: MS Vat110: בכל לשון שהיא שומעת 'in whatever language she understands' (MS Mung5: שומע שהי' שומעת).

a (comprehensive) oral translation of the pericope. Although the Tosefta does not include the *sota* in the list of pericopes that may be said in any language, this fact does not contradict the possibility of translation, but its necessity for the enactment of the ritual. The contrast between *ḥališa* and *sota* in Sifre Num. and the Yerushalmi would seem to suggest that in these sources no value was attached to Hebrew recitation, although it may have been accepted as a regular part of the ritual.

This sheds another light on the editorial form of the Mishna. The Mishnaic list is an 'either/or' arrangement: the pericope may either be said in any language (without Hebrew), or in the holy tongue. In this dichotomy, the situation that a pericope is first read in Hebrew to be followed by an oral-performative translation is not envisaged. It is quite likely that the Mishna forces the pericope into a mould, superimposed upon a series of *mishnayyot* that discussed rituals for the detail of their procedure. In this discussion, language selection played a part, but did not assume an overriding role. There is also an important difference between the rites, that the 'either/or' list cannot suitably accommodate: in the case of the *sota* ritual, Hebrew was mandatory for the written text, while understanding in whatever language the woman speaks is mandatory for the oral part of the ritual.

The ritual of the suspect woman is not the only one affected by the inability to understand and speak Hebrew. According to legal lore, no battle should commence before an anointed priest has addressed the troops in Hebrew. All our sources unequivocally assume that the priest would use the holy tongue in his speech. Forgoing the tenuous evidence for this stipulation¹⁰⁰—there is some evidence for a bilingual practice. According to two of our sources, the troops are in fact addressed twice. The second address by the officer in command could, according to the Yerushalmi, be carried out in any language: כמה דתימר בספר את אמר שוטר שומע מפי כהן (Y. Sot. 8.1, 22b; t. Sot. 7.16).¹⁰¹ 'On the border, as you say, the officer heard the pericope from the priest and delivered it to the people in any language'.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰For more details, see W.F. Smelik, 'Language Selection and the Holy Tongue in Early Rabbinic Literature', in L. Teugels and R. Ulmer (eds.), *Interpretation, Religion and Culture in Midrash and Beyond: Proceedings of the 2006 and 2007 SBL Midrash Sessions* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008), pp. 91–151 (128–33).

¹⁰¹y. Sot. 8.1, 22b; t. Sot. 7.16.

This presentation differs from Deut. 20, the source for the address by priest and official, where the latter has other things to say than the former, rather than interpreting into the vernacular what the priest declared in the holy tongue.

While conceived of as a bilingual ritual, the Hebrew component was indispensable and thus stressed—the mirror image of the *sota*-ritual, in which the legal necessity for understanding brought on a focus on the vernacular element. Yet the priest's words would be largely useless if the addressed troops could not understand a word of it, despite the inspiration they may have drawn from the numinous quality of the holy tongue. The rabbinic understanding of a *turgeman* ('interpreter') standing by the priest is suggestive. This is not to say that understanding was always prioritized. Sometimes non-Hebrew speakers actually had to pronounce Hebrew themselves in certain rituals, and on the spot translations or vernacular explanations would not help them in doing so. In such instances non-Hebrew speakers were accommodated by phonetic prompting, as in the ritual of the first fruits discussed above.¹⁰²

The address by the anointed war priest is interesting for other reasons as well. None of the rabbinic discussions relates the opening words of the priestly address, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, to the Shema, although these identical words in the Shema were understood to intimate vernacular understanding. There is no such suggestion in connection with this ritual, quite possibly because the language of the ritual never was in doubt. The justifications of any particular language selection reflect afterthoughts on a long-standing practice for rituals, which, in a number of instances, had become obsolete in the absence of the Temple. Why was the choice of Hebrew so evident for the priest addressing the troops? The decisive factor was the degree of priestly involvement.

Two rituals described in the same biblical chapter, Deuteronomy 26, but assigned to opposing lists of language selection in the Mishna, may help understand the differentiation better. In Deut. 26, the declaration of the second tithes (*ma'aser sheni*) in any language follows that of the first fruits (*bikkurim*) in Hebrew only. While differences between the rituals are discussed in rabbinic literature (e.g., t. Bik. 1.7), the difference in language requirement between *bikkurim* and *ma'aser sheni* remains untouched. But there is an obvious difference in context: unlike the first, annual decla-

¹⁰² See pp. 61–62 above.

ration, which must be made in the presence of the priest who receives the offering, the triennial confession of the second tithes was neither brought to the Temple, nor consumed in a religious ceremony, but given to 'the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat their fill in your settlements', after which the declaration takes place. The obvious reason for the language differentiation between *bikkurim* and *ma'aser sheni* is one of hieratic context. The ritual of *bikkurim* is situated in the context of a priestly, Temple-orientated ceremony, whereas the confession of the second tithes is not.

The mishnaic twofold list of rituals obfuscates the socio-historical context of all these rituals, but it is still discernible, since all the Hebrew-only rituals involve priests, whereas those that may be said in any language are non-priestly affairs or require understanding on the part of the non-priests involved. The language selection of the 'standing prayer' or Amida, the grace after meals, the oaths of testimony and of a deposit, all of which are included among those said in any language, is simply taken for granted and receives little attention in any of the rabbinic sources.¹⁰³ Only the language of the Amida was not altogether uncontroversial, since Hebrew was favoured by the rabbis for prayer in general, because 'angels do not understand Aramaic'. The common denominator of these four passages is that they require understanding on the part of the subject, as the Yerushalmi iterates. That also applies to the woman accused of adultery, although we observed that Hebrew plays a far larger role in this ritual than the mishnaic dichotomy would seem to suggest. Although priests also played the major part in this latter ritual, it in fact constituted a bilingual practice in which one language requirement concerned the writing of the scroll, and possibly reading out its text, whereas another language requirement regulated the priest's communication to the accused woman, which she had to understand to render the procedure legally valid.

When the Mishna discusses the performance of the anointed war priest ritual, it mentions the Hebrew language requirement without any explanation (m. Sot. 8.1): 'The anointed war [priest], when he spoke to the people, he would speak in the holy tongue...'. That the priest would use Hebrew in his official address is self-evident. It is probably not insignificant that the justifications for the Hebrew language of the listed rituals not only depend to a very considerable extent upon an analogy

¹⁰³ See y. Sot. 7.1, 21b; b. B. Sot. 33a.

with the ritual of the levitical blessings and the curses, but also just leave it at that without probing into the reason why the blessings and the curses themselves had to be recited in Hebrew. The mere analogy with another of the rituals presumes the self-explanatory nature of the language requirement. Associating any ritual with officiating priests and Levites was telling enough, although it would not constitute proof in rabbinic eyes, as only the text could generate hermeneutic evidence. Nonetheless, for the early rabbis the holy tongue and the language requirement of certain rituals are consanguineous. At this stage, the holy tongue still retains its character as a hieratic language.

All rituals listed in the second *mishna* of tractate *Sota* involve priests, whilst those listed in the first *mishna* do not, if we factor in that the *Shema* straddled both sides of the divide. Rabbinic literature passes over this feature in silence, although not without form, since rabbinic hermeneutics tend to ignore history and favour textuality—a textuality, of course, which remains firmly anchored in the rabbinic oral discourse. To disclose the original context is not to deny the rabbinic interpretation its legitimacy, but to put it in perspective.

2.6 Mishna and Tosefta in comparison

The attempts to seal the language selection for a limited number of passages yield varying results, with two dominant approaches: the analogy with the Levitical Curses and Blessings, ultimately rooted in an analogy with Exod. 19.19, and R. Yehuda's three 'semantic' criteria for Hebrew-only rituals. While these approaches were blended at some point, doubts persisted about the validity of the arguments as, in particular, the *Yerushalmi* testifies.

This discussion is the backdrop to the text of the *Mishna*, which implies the discussion of prooftexts but only gives a lacunary account in m. *Sot.* 7.3-4. Answering the question 'how [do we know that *bikkurim*] must be declared in the holy tongue?', the *mishna* adduces the verbal analogy of עֲנִיָּה וְאִמְרָה with the Levitical pericope as evidence, but stops short of offering any further analogy, or explaining why the Levitical blessings and curses may safely be assumed to be said in Hebrew. The same analogy with the blessings and curses is advanced in 7.4, this time in juxtaposition to R. Yehuda's opinion about the force of כֹּכָה as regards the language to be

used.¹⁰⁴ Against the background of the discussions in rabbinic literature as surveyed in the preceding section, these arguments are shown to be just two cogs in the mechanism of establishing the language requirement—capturing a fragment of each of the two predominant approaches, only to fall silent about the issue of language selection and its biblical evidence for all the other rites (from 7.5 onwards). No mention is made of the language requirement of the priestly blessing and the address of the anointed war priest, the two passages which cannot be related to the verbal analogy of *עניה ואמירה* (nor to ככה or כה)—ignoring, with the rabbinic discussions, the High Priest's blessings in which these words do not occur either. The Mishna tacitly approves the system-wide attempt to find scriptural support for the language selection, but it does not spell out all details necessary to make sense of its own division into two lists of rituals. On the other hand, the first four *mishnayot* tally with Tannaitic and Amoraic discussions, but much less so with the remainder of the tractate which focuses on details of procedure. These observations strengthen the theory that 7.1-4 belong to an editorial revision of the Mishna, which presupposes a far more elaborate discussion on all the Hebrew-only pericopes than it actually provides.

A comparison of the Mishna with the Tosefta appears to confirm this revision, as Hauptman also argues. The Tosefta, she writes, opens with six rituals which, like the *sota*-ritual, may be said in any language because they have to be understood by the person saying or hearing them.¹⁰⁵ This explains why they end up in this tractate.¹⁰⁶ When the Tosefta continues with a discussion of five other rituals, all of them have a parallel in the Mishna's eight Hebrew-only rituals; but the Tosefta makes no mention of the Hebrew language requirement. This discrepancy is highlighted by the lack of a Toseftan parallel for the Mishna's first two rituals, *bikkurim* and *ḥaliṣa*, which produced the scriptural proof of the Hebrew language requirement. The differences between the two lists, summarized in Table 2.1, are easily explained on the assumption that the redactor of the Mishna added these last two rituals, which 'lend themselves to derivation of the Hebrew language requirement from verses'.¹⁰⁸ Another difference follows

¹⁰⁴ See above, p. 58.

¹⁰⁵ Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 201–206.

¹⁰⁶ But see p. 74 n. 89 above.

¹⁰⁷ So MS Kaufman A50.

¹⁰⁸ Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, p. 203.

Mishna	Tosefta
7.1 בלשון or בכל לשון ¹⁰⁷	[no header]
↓	oath of testimony—בכל לשון 7.1
-	oath of judges 7.1
7.1 accused woman	-
7.1 second tithes	-
-	blessings 7.7
-	Hallel-psalms 7.7
7.1 Shema	Shema ↓ 7.7
7.1 Amida	Amida 7.7
7.1 Grace after meals	-
7.1 oath of testimony	↑
7.1 oath of deposit	-
-	Rabbi: Shema—בלשון הקדש 7.7
7.2 בלשון הקודש	[no header]
7.3 first fruits	-
7.4 removal of the shoe	-
7.5 blessings & curses	↓ (8.1)
7.6 priestly blessing	priestly blessing 7.7
7.7 High Priest's blessing(s)	-
7.8 king's pericope	king's pericope 7.13
8.1 anointed war priest	anointed war priest 7.18
↑ (7.5)	blessings & curses 8.1
9.1 broken neck heifer	broken neck heifer 9.1

Table 2.1: Comparative table of pericopes

from this insertion: since the pericope of the blessings and the curses delivers the proof-text for their language requirement, it now follows these two rituals in the Mishna, whereas in the Tosefta this pericope occurs later. To complete the list of Hebrew rituals, the Mishna's redactor adds the High Priest's blessing. Finally, he adds the summary statement of 7.2 and the questions how the language requirement can be derived from Scripture. Thus the Tosefta sheds light on the final revision of the Mishna. But what is the purport of the Mishna's redaction, or the novelty of the Tosefta? In Hauptman's view, the default position in the Tosefta is Hebrew to the extent that this requirement did not have to be stated expressly; the novel

point it makes is that certain rituals may be performed in any language at all. This leniency is also the true novel point of the Mishna's first list; but in a bid for symmetry and clarity, the Mishna added the second list as a mnemonic device. This second list merely states the default position.¹⁰⁹

At this juncture, I beg to differ. Whilst the Tosefta may not start with two contrastive lists of rituals, it mirrors the structure of the Mishna: first come several rituals, which may be said in any language, and then those which the Mishna arranged as 'these are said in the holy tongue', as Table 2.1 above bears out (Hauptman's table covers only the second half, thereby obscuring the parallel). It opens with oaths that may explicitly be said in any language, but are missing in the Mishna. The question in 7.2, "The oath of judges—how so?", follows those of the Mishnaic list of 7.5-8 insofar as it means 'how did they do it', not 'how come it may be said in any language'. The Tosefta continues to discuss the severity of the task that lies ahead of both judges and witnesses, and impinges on their minds not to use God's name in vain and swear falsely. The following *halakhot* focus on the acuteness of their testimony in court and using the Name of God; the explanation and commentary offered suggest that legal and semantic clarity is incumbent on those in charge of imposing the oath. 7.5 deals with the validity of adjurations in the Tora for later generations, and 7.6 with the acceptance to read the Scroll of Esther, which, according to one reading of Est. 9.27, was confirmed by swearing (cf. b. Shevu. 39a). Then it concludes the discussion of rituals performed in any language with 7.7, listing a series of rituals which may be said in any language. Note that the priestly blessing is the first ritual in the Tosefta that belongs to the Mishna's Hebrew-only list, immediately after Rabbi's remark that the Shema should be said in the holy tongue. The Tosefta never suggests that any of the latter pericopes may be said in any language.¹¹⁰

It is implausible that the Tosefta would mirror the Mishna's division of rituals into two lists without any knowledge of the distinction on the basis of language selection, all the more so since it refers to 'any language' at the start of the chapter (7.1), and to the holy tongue immediately before discussing its five rituals which the Mishna records as being said in the holy tongue exclusively (7.7); the two references to language selection thus occur *exactly* at the start of the Tosefta's two lists of rituals, in full agreement

¹⁰⁹Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, pp. 204–206.

¹¹⁰So also Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, p. 204.

with the Mishna. There may not be a summary statement in the Tosefta, as in m. Sot. 7.1-2, but the contents of the Tosefta entirely agree with this division and the language indicators mark each section accordingly. Thus the topical arrangement probably already stood when the Tosefta's editor(s) chose to offer their own version. When they did, they professed more interest in the passages not found in the Mishna—the oaths of witnesses and judges—which may well represent the Tosefta's addition to the version of the Mishna it responds to. The inclusion of four rituals in the statement, 'Blessings, Hallel, Shema and Prayer (Amida) are said in any language' serves to include the opinion of Rabbi, who holds that the Shema should be recited in the holy tongue. The Tosefta may not mention the Hebrew language requirement explicitly for the five rituals which are known to be Hebrew-only because it had no need to do so, as it is essentially in agreement with whatever version of the Mishna it responds to.

Tempting as it is, we cannot automatically infer from an absence in the Tosefta how the Ur-Mishna was worded, since the Tosefta frequently assumes the existence of a fuller text with details that have not been explicitly stated. Frequently, no sense can be made of the Tosefta without reading it in conjunction with the Mishna. As recent research has emphasized, the reverse occurs as well, and cases where the Mishna should be read in conjunction with the Tosefta have been duly identified.¹¹¹ The Tosefta will shed light on the Mishna, even if the Mishna is rarely incomprehensible by itself, even when it is enigmatic. The same cannot always be said for the Tosefta. Apparently, the Tosefta does not always include the entire Ur-Mishna as its point of reference and thus omits crucial information. A good example of this phenomenon is the oblique reference to the locale of the priestly blessing in t. Sot. 7.7, which could be the chamber of hewn stone, at the steps of the porch, or in the provinces outside Jerusalem, locations the Tosefta does not even mention, but which are crucial to understand its reference.¹¹² This is not an isolated case: the king's pericope and the anointed war priest receive much additional comment in the Tosefta, but have a similar poor introduction. Dealing with the king's pericope, the Tosefta quotes a small fragment of its Vorlage, במה של עץ היו עושין לו בעזרה

¹¹¹ For a discussion of the relationship between the two sources, their interdependence and the various scholarly models of interpretation, see A. Houtman, *Mishnah and Tosefta: A Synoptic Comparison of the Tractates Berakhot and Shebiit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996).

¹¹² For more detail, see Smelik, 'Language Selection', pp. 133-35.

עליה 'they make him a platform of wood in the courtyard, and he sits on it',¹¹³ but it does not even state that we are now dealing with the king's pericope. Concerning the anointed war priest, the Tosefta skips his address to the people (Deut. 20.2-3), and starts with that of the officers (20.8). In other words, the Tosefta leaves things out which are, somehow, presumed to be there. What was there, must have been a version of the Mishna; if not the present Mishna, than a predecessor.

The Mishna, at its time of redaction, inherited the distinction between two sets of rituals on the basis of the language in which they are performed, but without emphasis on this distinction. The redactor added some additional items to 7.1, including the *sota* ritual which, if both read and translated, could actually be included among both sets of rituals—but since understanding was crucial, the vernacular element was highlighted. Among the rituals which are said in any language, the Tosefta only includes those which were still relevant to its own day; where the Mishna includes the *sota* and confession of the second tithes, the Tosefta remains silent. Far more significant are the changes to 7.2-4, where the additions of חליצה and בכורים aim at finding scriptural proof for the language requirement. The Mishna eases the structure of its presentation by the summary statements (even if a rudimentary form of these statements probably already existed), and adds a concern for finding scriptural proof. This concern is signalled only once in the Tosefta, when it records Rabbi's opinion that the word 'they shall be' stipulates the use of Hebrew for the Shema. This addition of the Tosefta mirrors the addition of חליצה and בכורים in the Mishna. Whether or not these rituals were added in toto or only insofar as their language requirements are concerned, cannot be established without considerable conjecture.¹¹⁴ But what is clear is that both the Mishna and the Tosefta attest to a growing desire to identify scriptural proof for the issue of language selection; the prominence of language selection in the Mishna's summary statements and especially the greater attention to the stipulation of Hebrew in 7.3-4 indicate an increased sensitivity to the issue.

¹¹³The Mishna has a slightly different wording and much more detail.

¹¹⁴That the Tosefta has no parallel for both these rituals, nor for the high priest's blessing, is far from decisive, even on the assumption that the Tosefta responds to an Ur-Mishna; as argued, it may not repeat to what it responds in toto. In t. Yev. 12.9 it is assumed that the *ḥaliṣa* procedure was conducted in Hebrew; cf. Sifre Deut. 291, 301.

Accordingly, the novel point in both the Tosefta and the Mishna's final version is decidedly not the permission to say certain rituals in any language. On the contrary, m. Sot. 7.1-4 is mainly interested in the Hebrew-only rituals and in the evidence for the Hebrew language requirement. The Talmudim and Midrashim reinforce the impression that the insistence on the use of Hebrew is the actual interest of the later Tannaim and the Amoraim. Several passages which the Mishna allows to be recited in any language are not discussed as far as the issue of language selection is concerned. That the Shema may be said in a vernacular is not mentioned in Sifre Deut. In similar ways to the Mishna itself, which professes no interest in justifying the free language selection, the Midrashim ignore this aspect, unless the issue has additional halakhic relevance, as in the legal requirements of the *sota* ritual. The reason for the free language selection ('free' is somewhat misleading because it was not so much free as it was compulsory for the addressed woman to be able to follow what was being said to her, and thus language selection was subject to her linguistic ability) is that both the legal procedure and the actual effect of the bitter water required her full understanding. But this ritual was accompanied by a Hebrew text written for the occasion and, according to some sources, recitation in Hebrew accompanied either by translation or explanation into her vernacular. The discussions focus predominantly on the imperative use of the holy tongue, not on the vernacular of the participants. If the Mishna reveals traces of editorial interest in the second issue, it does not automatically follow that the division into two sets of language-determined rituals was born out of the same editorial interest.

There is a remarkable concurrence between the Mishna, the Tosefta and the Halakhic Midrashim in the use of the notion 'holy tongue'.¹¹⁵ This notion is invoked twice in reference to a father's responsibility to teach his children Hebrew—closely associated with teaching them Tora and the Shema.¹¹⁶ Not coincidentally, the language selection for the recitation of the Shema attracted most controversy, as we observed above. But all other

¹¹⁵Sifre Deut. mentions the holy tongue most frequently (46; 55; 210; 291; 301; 333). I am cautious in using Midrash Tannaim; see M. I. Kahana, 'The Halakhic Midrashim', in Safrai et al. (eds.), *The Literature of the Sages*, II, pp. 3-105 (100-103); H. Basser, 'Midrash Tannaim', in J. Neusner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Midrash: Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), I, pp. 510-19.

¹¹⁶Sifre Zuta 15:38; Sifre Deut. 46; t. Hag. 1.2; Midr. Tan. Deut. 11.19. Cf. b. Suk. 42a; b. Qid. 29a. See S.D. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism

instances are brought up in connection with the pericopes of m. Sot. 7.2,¹¹⁷ or the criteria associated with them; with one exception,¹¹⁸ no reference to any other connotation such as the primordial language or angelic speech is made unless the sources are later. Wherever they profess an interest in the language requirements of the listed pericopes, they share the Mishna's interest in scriptural justification of the language requirement. This halakhic and ritual slant is conspicuous notwithstanding the halakhic nature of those Midrashim that favour the preservation of halakhic traditions, for the halakhic Midrashim contain a considerable amount of aggadic material in spite of their name. All the same, the various analogies offered indicate that Tannaitic rabbis are linked to many attempts to find scriptural proof for an almost invariable set of pericopes which were required to be read in Hebrew. The Mishna makes a novel point, which is also born out by the Midrashim: the holy tongue is stipulated by the Tora in a number of cases, whereas the vernacular is prescribed in others. This novel point is decidedly not that certain rituals may be said in any language—which the Tosefta and the Mishna not only clearly state, but are likely to have inherited from an Ur-Mishna—but that other rituals may not. The controversy about reciting the Shema in Greek, reported by the Yerushalmi (above, p. 68) and highlighted by the Tosefta, testifies to the insistence among some rabbis on using Hebrew wherever possible. The same applies to the scriptural proof for the Hebrew language requirement, added to the Mishna's final version. Hauptman writes, 'As time passed, the requirement of Hebrew appears to have been relaxed, in particular for those rituals that do not involve the recitation of verses'.¹¹⁹ I think the reverse is more likely:

in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries', in Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, pp. 253–86 (269 n. 40). These texts are discussed on p. 91 below.

¹¹⁷Mek. בחדש 2 (p. 207); בחדש 9 (p. 238); Sifre Num. 12; 39; Sifre Zuta 15,38; Sifre Deut. 46, 55, 210, 291, 301. In addition, there are mentions in Mek. SbY וארא 6, וארא 19; Midr. Tan. 11.19; 11.29; 12.5; 20.2; 21.7; 25.9; 26.5.

¹¹⁸The relevant passage in Mek. SbY וארא 6.2 compares Moses' speech in the holy tongue to that of an angel, while Aaron in the implied role of turgeman speaks Egyptian (edn Epstein–Melamed, p. 6). According to the (now outdated) edition, the passage is purportedly attested in a medieval commentary to the Mekhilta by R. Abraham Halahmi who quotes Mek. SbY, but in fact a reconstruction based on MHG, bracketed by single angle quotes to mark an instance of haplography in the commentary (homoioarcton in this case). The haplography is speculative, requires emendation, and the source is doubtful as a witness for the early text form.

¹¹⁹Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, p. 198 n. 99.

as time passed by, and Hebrew had receded to the far corners of society, the requirement of Hebrew received formal attention and replaced initial leniency in respect of the use of other languages. The insistence upon using Hebrew—which is not the same as the practice of using Hebrew—signals a concern which is mirrored in the weighing of language choices for the reading of the *megillah* (Esther).

2.7 The new relevance of the holy tongue

It comes as no surprise that sages made the justification of language selection dependent upon textual clues in the Tora, while they no longer differentiated any of the mentioned rituals on the basis of priestly involvement. Detached from their socio-historical provenance, the pericopes were divided into two groups, a division which received substantial attention first in the Tosefta and later in the Mishna. As a consequence, a straight-jacket was imposed upon all passages grouped together in m. Sot. 7.1-2 which did not allow for further qualifications. Closer analysis suggests that certain rituals were probably bilingual, such as the address to the troops, which may have been followed by a translation into any language, or the *sota*-ritual, which involved a written Hebrew text, and possibly Hebrew recitation, before the accused woman was addressed in her own language. The Shema was said both individually and communally, both outside the Temple and within, and it seems more than likely that there also existed differences in the expected language of performance, depending on the location.

The early rabbis did not close their eyes to the reality of the multilingual world they inhabited. They deemed Hebrew indispensable in only a few cases, as we saw in the previous chapter, allowing for other languages in all others. Moreover, even when they insisted on Hebrew they provided for those who did not speak the language any longer.¹²⁰ Since many people refrained from the ritual of the first fruits because they had not mastered Hebrew, the practice of prompting the declaration was put into place. In the proof-text for this practice, the word עֲנִיָּה is taken in what may well have been its older, antiphonal understanding as ‘responding’ in a mimetic fashion. The wording suggests that this was long-standing

¹²⁰ See above, pp. 61–62 and pp. 72–79.

practice, which, however, ended with the destruction of the Temple. In the *ḥaliṣa* ritual the judges read out the required passages from Deut. 25 to the man and woman involved in this procedure.¹²¹ The *sota*-ritual, concerning the wife accused of adultery, required the priest to explain its details to her in her mother tongue. A sacred scroll of the Tora could be written in Greek (m. Meg. 1.8), a ruling which is ill at peace with other stipulations, most notably the requirement of the square script for Sacred Scripture (m. Yad. 4.5), but obviously would have stood Greek-speaking Jews in good stead. The Aramaic legal documents from Murabba'at outnumber those written in Mishnaic Hebrew. Marriage contracts and bills of divorce were usually written in Aramaic, although other languages were permitted, and a Greek bill witnessed in Hebrew is deemed acceptable (m. Git. 9.8). All these rulings imply that the Palestinian rabbis were well aware of the different native tongues and took these on board.

Against the background of a multilingual society in which Hebrew slipped away as a vernacular, the novel tendency to insist upon Hebrew recitation of certain rituals, which were no longer actual after the loss of the Temple, assumes new significance. The rabbis cling to Hebrew recitation in the rituals of *bikkurim* or the *sota*. Why was this circumstance brought up in the memory of the rabbis? Merely pointing to the spur of conserving ancient tradition is an unsatisfactory explanation; there is a contemporary reason behind such efforts. To quote Strohm:

How and why do memories enter a text? Partially, perhaps, from the past... But more urgently, they come from the future—from a new alignment of circumstances that brings new possibilities into view or enables the articulation of what was previously regarded as unsayable.¹²²

A new alignment of circumstances arguably arose after the defeat of Bar Kokhba, when any remaining clusters of native Hebrew speakers were caught up in the upheaval of the war and its aftermath and any survivors dispersed. From a literary language, which had a minor role to play as a vernacular, Hebrew had now become a purely religious language. A series

¹²¹ m. Yev. 12.6; b. Yev. 106b.

¹²² P. Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Medieval Cultures, 26; University of Minneapolis Press, 2000), p. 104.

of Palestinian traditions promote the use of the holy tongue (y. Sheq. 3.4, 47c):¹²³

תאנא בשם ר' מאיר כל מי שקבוע בארץ־ישראל ומדבר לשון הקדש ואוכל פירותיו
בטהרה וקורא ק"ש בבקר ובערב יהא מבושר שכן העולם הבא הוא

It was taught in the name of R. Meir, Whoever is settled in the land of Israel
and speaks the holy tongue and eats his fruit in purity and recites the Shema
by morning and evening, may rest assured of the world to come.

The emphasis R. Meir places on Hebrew has been taken as a despairing attempt to keep the Hebrew vernacular alive,¹²⁴ or conversely as an indication Hebrew remained a spoken language all along.¹²⁵ However, the religious context of this teaching implies not so much a Hebrew vernacular but a basic verbal ability to recite rote-learned texts. In the same vein, fathers are encouraged in the strongest of terms to teach their children the holy tongue together with the Tora.¹²⁶ The close association with the Tora, the recitation of the Shema and purity suggest to me that the envisaged competence in Hebrew may have applied to a limited range of specific language functions of a religious nature, rather than everyday life, even if the learning would have included teaching one's son to recite the Tora in the synagogue service. The insistence among Palestinian sages that the holy tongue be spoken served new and potent goals, steering Judaism away from the use of translations in the fulfilment of religious obligations, hammering down the significance of the holy tongue even in situations that did not actually occur any longer. The recitation of the Shema in Greek attracted great controversy, as we observed,¹²⁷ and the rabbinic preference—even in lenient positions—is clearly to recite in Hebrew. All these texts do is point to the pressures of other languages upon the use of Hebrew and to a revival of Hebrew as an ideologically charged religious language,¹²⁸ which initially was probably confined to the rabbinic elite and their most ardent followers.

¹²³In Scal3 the relevant part of the text is supplied in the margin by another hand, unlike the Krotoshin edn. Parallels: y. Shab. 1.3, 3c; Sifre Deut. 333; Midr. Tan. Deut. 32.43.

¹²⁴E.Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, 6; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), pp. 8–15.

¹²⁵Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 269 n. 40.

¹²⁶See p. 87 n. 116 above.

¹²⁷See pp. 67–72 above.

¹²⁸So N. de Lange, 'The Revival of the Hebrew Language in the Third Century CE.', *JSQ* 3 (1996), pp. 342–58.

But the insistence upon Hebrew is exposed, almost in passing, as unreal in b. B. Qam. 82b–83a (par. b. Sot. 49b):

והתניא בארץ ישראל לשון סורסי למה או לשון הקדש או לשון יונית וא"ר יוסי בבב
 לשון ארמי למה או לשון הקדש או לשון פרסי
 Has it not been taught, [Rabbi said,]¹²⁹ Why Aramaic¹³⁰ in the land of Israel?
 Either the holy tongue or Greek! And Rav Yoseph¹³¹ said, Why Aramaic in
 Babylon? Either the holy tongue or Persian!

This pair of sayings is meant to bolster the opinion that teaching the Greek language is allowed, so that the objections to Aramaic are a sidethought which have not been spelt out in the sort of detail we would have liked to see. Nonetheless, it is not hard to understand why Rabbi restricts his rhetorical question to 'the land of Israel'. When we move from Palestine to Babylon, we move from Greek to Aramaic; the use of Aramaic in Babylonia would have been less controversial, whereas its avoidance would have been highly problematic. In Palestine, both Greek and the holy tongue enjoyed the esteem of high cultural languages, in contrast to Aramaic, which was disparaged in the Roman Empire, as the church father Chrysostom attests: 'For they [the Italians] do not so much despise the barbarian, the Greek, or any other tongue as the Syriac...' In Syria, Jerome complains that he was surrounded by Aramaic speakers: 'either I must learn the barbarous gibberish or I must keep my mouth shut'.¹³² It is more difficult to understand why the use of Persian in Babylonia is promoted in this *baraita* to the detriment of Aramaic. What does this tell us?

The second saying is attributed to either R. Yose or Rav Yoseph, two equally plausible readings (with most textual witnesses supporting the latter reading).¹³³ If we assume, for the sake of argument, that the attribution to R. Yose is original, it is important to recall that he was a Palestinian

¹²⁹The plus אמר רבי in Vilna is supported by Flor, Ham165, Mun95 and Son1489, but not by the archival fragment Fr ebr. 14, Vat116 and EscGI3.

¹³⁰סורסי stands for Galilean Aramaic; ארמי is far more general.

¹³¹The reading יוסף is supported by all mss: Flor; Ham165; Mun95; Fr ebr. 14; Vat116; EscGI3. However, Vilna and the Son1489 read יוסי. Moreover, in the parallel b. Sot. 49b Ox20, Vat110, Ox2833 and Vilna support יוסף, while Mun95 reads אסי.

¹³²Both Chrysostom and Jerome are cited after D.G.K. Taylor, 'Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia', in J.N. Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 298–331 [305].

¹³³See n. 131 above.

Tanna whose opinion does not necessarily reflect the Babylonian situation. Does this tell us anything about Babylonian views on the use of Aramaic, or rather about R. Yose (or the editor attributing this view to him)? If genuine, this reading would appear to underscore R. Yose's dislike of Aramaic, carrying it *ad absurdum*: it is a Babylonian source that puts these words into his mouth. At face value, the attribution to R. Yose has much to commend itself. Rav Yoseph was a Babylonian Amora, second generation, while R. Yose was a Palestinian Tanna of the fourth generation who often disputed with Rabbi; he is thus a more likely protagonist here. It is hard to imagine how Rav Yoseph could have rejected the use of Aramaic, for he was the authority of the Aramaic translation *par excellence*; the Targum was even attributed to him *in persona*. On this view, the reading 'Yoseph' is a simple scribal mistake for 'Yose', possibly as a result of an abbreviation (י') which was filled out incorrectly. On the other hand, all manuscripts read 'Rav Yoseph' (except for the error in Mun95), the editions of Sota concur and the scribal mistake may also have led to the reading 'Yose'. One would also expect a Babylonian sage to make such a bold claim for Babylonia, rather than a Palestinian, who would not even know Persian. On this assumption, the rejection of Aramaic on his part cannot be taken literally, but Rav Yoseph's statement highlights the absurdity of Rabbi's claim and thus provides a highly ironic comment on the use of Aramaic in both areas. When all is said and done, both readings boil down to a similar ironic criticism of Rabbi's position—if the ascription to Rabbi is original.

So what are we to make of the position ascribed to Rabbi? If R. Yehuda did not aim at Aramaic as a vernacular, which would not seem very plausible, two alternative interpretations suggest themselves: (1) he objected to Aramaic in rabbinic (halakhic) discourse, and/or (2) he declined the use of Aramaic in the liturgy, aiming at the Bible translation and/or prayers. The first option, that he rejected Aramaic as a vehicle for the transmission of halakhic discourse, has much to recommend it. The Palestinian halakhic tradition has been couched in Hebrew. Tannaitic sources have been written in Hebrew, while even the *gemara* in the *Yerushalmi* is predominantly in Hebrew. Admittedly, some of the *Midrashim* are bilingual (Hebrew/Aramaic), such as *Genesis Rabba* and *Midrash Echa*, but these *Midrashim* are not of a predominantly halakhic nature. Conversely, the Babylonian *gemara* contains a large amount of Aramaic. Admittedly, the longer period of redaction for the *Bavli* contributed to this linguistic

difference, but time and depth of redaction are unlikely to explain it all. In this connection it is worthwhile to recall that Palestinian responsa are predominantly written in Hebrew, in stark contrast to the responsa written by their Babylonian peers who initially used Aramaic interspersed with some Hebrew, and later Arabic.¹³⁴ The second option, however, is perhaps more plausible: the choice between Hebrew and Greek which Rabbi advocates can be better understood in terms of scriptural translation than rabbinic discourse. The Greek translations boasted an estimable pedigree and enjoyed a high degree of prestige and concomitant acceptance.

All this goes to show that there was a sustained effort among Palestinian sages to preserve the use of Hebrew for religious purposes, academic as the language may have become.¹³⁵ Rabbi's position is related to an ideology of Hebrew rather than a society in which the use of Hebrew was still a viable option for everyday speech, which carried consequences for a specific function of Aramaic in the sayings quoted above. This ideology, as De Lange wrote, was probably 'buttressed by a theory in which the Hebrew language was uniquely linked to the people of Israel and their God'.¹³⁶ The ingredients for the myth already existed and coalesced in the Amoraic period, if not earlier.¹³⁷ However, the emphasis was initially placed on certain rituals which had to be performed in Hebrew and the scriptural proof for this exclusivity, which make up for the vast majority of occurrences of the term 'holy tongue' in Tannaitic literature. But before we turn to the rationale for the exclusivity of these rituals, we need to consider the wider application of the term 'holy tongue'.

Marking Hebrew as the 'holy tongue' in the Midrashim requires some clarification. When Sifre Deut. 210 states, "'They answered and said" (Deut. 21.7), in the Holy Tongue', or Sifre Deut. 55 identifies the blessings and the curses as Hebrew, this amounts to a tautology; as the text is written in Hebrew, who would have argued that it was not? These rituals were, as far as we can tell, not practised anymore, so that the Midrashim do not simply claim what used to be in Hebrew should so remain. Moreover, the criteria

¹³⁴R. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹³⁵M. Sokoloff, 'The Hebrew of Bereshit Rabba According to MS Vat. Ebr. 30', *Leshonenu* 33 (1968–1969), pp. 25–42; A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 202–14.

¹³⁶De Lange, 'Revival', p. 343.

¹³⁷Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', pp. 69–70.

for Hebrew-only passages were eventually extended to texts which did not involve any ritual whatsoever. In Mek. בחודש 9 the 'blanket statement' of כה עניא אמירה כה ככה is applied to another context:

ויאמר ה' אל משה כה תאמר בלשון שאני אומר כה תאמר אל בני ישראל בלשון הקדש
כל מקום שנאמר כה ככה עניייה ואמירה הרי זה בלשון קדש
And the LORD said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites' (Exod. 20.22).
In the language in which I speak to you you shall speak to my children, in the
holy tongue. Wherever the expression 'thus, so, speak up and say' is used, it
means in the holy tongue.

This verse is implicated in none of the pericopes listed in m. Sot. 7.2, but the argument applied to these pericopes is borrowed here in what is essentially a tautological argument.¹³⁸ If the Tora is in Hebrew (and presumes Moses spoke Hebrew), why identify the language as the holy tongue? That reason is not the historical occasion or the text itself, but the endeavour to justify the exclusivity of Hebrew in other contexts. The correspondence between Moses' speech and God's language highlights the unique and special nature of Hebrew as the holy tongue. The application of the blanket statement to Moses' speech underscores the importance of the principle itself, not in its original context, but in the world of Late Antiquity. The same verse might justify any claim of divine origin for the Hebrew language, since the verse goes on to say: 'You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven'.

There is nothing unusual in the rabbinic attempt to ground halakhic opinions in Scripture, or to disagree on the methodology of doing so. Yet such attempts are significant for the choices made and those not made, which together obliterate alternative conditions which were once relevant for rituals no longer practised. To illustrate the choices made, and the conditions thereby obliterated from memory, we may briefly reconsider those passages which meet one of the criteria surveyed above, such as עניא

¹³⁸There is doubt, however, whether the rule is genuine here; it is entirely absent from MS Ox24 (edn Horowitz, p. 238), which reads: אמר יי אל משה תאמר אל בני ישראל בלשון הקדש, but not the statement about 'so, thus' etc. In his *Scripture as Logos*, Yadin has argued that the R. Ishmael Midrashim do not endorse generic hermeneutic principles which the interpreter can apply at will, but rather espouse the principle that Scripture itself provides unique hermeneutic markers, which are restricted to the marked verse or even the halakhic conclusion derived from it. The sentence in the Mekhilta, therefore, may represent an intrusion, made by a copyist who knew the principle from other sources.

‘speaking up and saying’, yet failed to make the grade for either of the Mishnaic lists.¹³⁹ They were omitted for obvious reasons, as we will shortly see. These passages include Abraham’s pleading for Sodom (Gen. 18.27); Laban and Bethuel’s conversation with Abraham’s servant (Gen. 24.50);¹⁴⁰ the encounter between Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 42.22); Balaq’s blessing (Num. 23.12),¹⁴¹ and others. If there was a special reason for invoking the blanket statement in the Mekhilta in reference to Exod. 20.22, this may have been lost on later exegetes, who also refer to Balaq and Joseph as speaking in the holy tongue—admittedly without invoking any criteria, but it is hardly coincidental that the ruling of ענין ואמירה applies.

A far more speculative explanation connects an increased sensibility to the language of the Shema to the construction of a Jewish identity in the era of Christian rule. Boyarin has argued that, unlike earlier Greek-Jewish martyrology, which identified *kashrut* as the core of being Jewish, later rabbinic literature singled out the Shema.¹⁴² The selection of Hebrew as the required language for reading out this text would tend to mark off Jews from Christians, who, if they would choose to profess allegiance to this creed, would not be able to use Hebrew. In its double association with the Tora from Heaven and the Temple that once was, Hebrew may have very gradually assumed the status of a religious symbol of Judaism, an aspect of Judaism that could not be disenfranchized. Such symbolism may have attached itself to short passages that lent themselves to rote-learning, because the value of Hebrew for the rabbinic Jewish identity never became absolute or even dominant.¹⁴³ In this sense, in the polemics with especially nascent Christianity, it is understandable that the notion of the holy tongue expanded.¹⁴⁴ Such a polemic development may help explain why the Talmudim and especially later Midrashim operate on a broader understanding of what the ‘holy tongue’ conveys, building upon precur-

¹³⁹ As a hendiadys, Num. 23.12; Deut. 1.41; 21.7; 25.9; 26.5; Isa. 21.9; Jer. 11.5; Zech. 3.4; 4.4; 6.11; 6.4; 1 Chr. 12.18. In one verse (Tora only): Gen. 18.27; 23.5, 10, 14; 24.50; 27.37, 39; 31.14, 31, 36, 43; 40.18; 41.16; 42.22; 45.3; Exod. 4.1; 19.8; 24.3; Num. 11.28; 22.18; 23.12, 26; 32.31; Deut. 1.14, 41; 21.7; 25.9; 26.5; 27.14–15.

¹⁴⁰ See p. 64 above.

¹⁴¹ For Balaq speaking the holy tongue, see Num. R. 20.14; TanB. בלק 13; Tan. בלק 9.

¹⁴² D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford University Press, 1999), Ch. 4.

¹⁴³ Stern, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 79–80.

¹⁴⁴ See Rubin, ‘The Language of Creation’; Schwartz, ‘Language, Power and Identity’.

sors in the Second Temple period.¹⁴⁵ They refer to the notion of Hebrew as the language of creation, the primordial language, Joseph's ability (and Pharaoh's failure) to speak Hebrew besides the seventy languages of the world, and Hebrew as one of three shared characteristics between humans and angels.

Polemics, to be sure, cannot account for the whole gamut of rabbinic interpretation. Hebrew as the language of the priestly elite bestowed a considerable amount of prestige both on those who used 'the language of the sanctuary' and on texts written in this ancient language. The exclusive use of Hebrew in the so-called 'sectarian' scrolls found in the Dead Sea area illustrates this point.¹⁴⁶ The religious prestige of Hebrew may well be the primary reason for the Mishna to have been composed in that language.¹⁴⁷ Capitalizing on the status of Hebrew, the rabbis effectively also monopolized interpretation and legislation and, quite possibly, thereby extended their attempt to assert hegemony over Jews outside the rabbinic orbit.

Ultimately, the emphasis on Hebrew stems from the central focus on the Tora with all the details of its wording. With the loss of the Temple, the original reasons for the language-differentiation disappeared from view, and when these Tannaitic traditions entered their fossilizing stage, the sages were predominantly interested in supplying text-immanent reasons for what may have been time-honoured, locally sanctioned, traditions. The emphasis on text-immanency depends on the notion of the Tora as Sacred Scripture, which inevitably fostered a growing awareness that holiness permeates the language of its text. The search for text-immanent clues would not inevitably lead to more and more emphasis on the original language of the Tora, but it did. Tannaitic leniency with regard to the language of set prayers, recitations and ceremonies such as the Shema, Amida and the very Tora itself were gradually abandoned in favour of a stricter approach and insistence upon the use of Hebrew. A good example of this process is the requirement to read *megillat Esther* in Hebrew if at

¹⁴⁵Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', pp. 70–72.

¹⁴⁶See S. Weitzman, 'Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?', *JAOS* 119 (1999), pp. 35–45. His conclusion is dependent on the assumption that these scrolls are sectarian: 'Why did they write in Hebrew? To transcend the wayward ways of the multilingual society around them' (45). However, his argument relies entirely on evidence culled from non-sectarian documents (4Q464, Philo, Jubilees).

¹⁴⁷De Lange, 'Revival', pp. 345–48; Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity', p. 34.

all possible.¹⁴⁸ The greater value of hearing the text in a language one does not understand espouses the value of the holy tongue versus the value of understanding. That understanding had been an issue is still clear from the wording in both the Mishna and the Tosefta, but later rabbis were less concerned with understanding as with the use of the holy tongue.

For the halakhic corpus, the main interest in the holy tongue is related to certain priestly ceremonies. The great aggadic notions of the language of creation, the eschaton, or the divine realm are conspicuous by their absence, not so much because they did not exist but because they were not selected for inclusion and subject of debate. In early rabbinic literature there is ample reason to believe that the inherited term לשון הקודש referred to a ritual language in the first place, which meant little more than לשון המקדש, 'Temple language'. This conclusion agrees with a more regional approach to the meaning of the holy tongue in other religions, which appear to function as a ritual language. As such, the notion was not necessarily devoid of mythological overtones, but these elements did not take centre stage until a much later period. But the Midrashim, which seek to justify the language requirements and thereby mark the position of Hebrew, relate the concept to God's own voice, turning the 'holy tongue' into 'the language of the Holy One blessed be He'. And that very meaning informs the layer which the Mishna added, and which the Tosefta added in one case only, that of the Shema. Later still, the notion of the 'holy tongue' took on a privileged position, possibly in view of threats to its position since this development took place as a corollary of the disappearance of Hebrew usage in the second century CE. Over the course of time, the mere association with the Temple evaporated as evidence, but the Tannaitic sources still imbued the notion with a ritualistic sense, not with eschatological or primordial connotations.

The ritual sense of the holy tongue lingers on in the medieval comments of those commentators like Rashba who deemed any language in which a religious command could be fulfilled tantamount to the holy tongue. The holiness pertains to its ritual role rather than to any specific language. In another sense, the ritual connotation of the notion of the holy tongue is expressed negatively, in the sense that the most common denotation of Hebrew is not the holy tongue, but Ashurit.

¹⁴⁸ See pp. 190–201 below.

The Hebrew language requirement in the Mishna reflects the discussions given more fully in the Midrashim and Talmudim in abridged form, and betrays the connection between the Mishna's editorial shape and the arduous journey towards waterproof arguments and an increased interest in the exclusivity of Hebrew. The language differentiation of the Mishna and the Tosefta became a vehicle to express the value of language requirements, while the initial overall leniency dissipated over the course of time. When we take a long-term view on the practice of prayer, blessings and rite, there is an unmistakeable tendency towards the exclusivity of Hebrew.

The multilingual context of language selection

Over seven centuries, Roman Palestine staged Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew as Jewish languages besides several minority languages such as Nabataean, Phoenician, Latin, Arabic, Armenian and Georgian. The pre-Roman intersection of administrative and cultural languages with local vernaculars would remain characteristic for the Ancient Near East in general and Roman Palestine in particular. While the Romans used Latin for internal official communication throughout their empire, they did not impose their own language upon any of their subjects but published their imperial decrees in Greek, the new *lingua franca* in the Eastern part of the Empire where hardly any province was monolingual.

The multilingual context is manifestly relevant for the rabbinic views on the uses of language in Jewish society and influenced early rabbinic thought, as we have already had occasion to see. First, the rabbis accorded each language a meaningful place in the family of languages, subsumed under Hebrew as the mother of all languages, with acute relevance for the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Second, the rabbis considered the notion of the holy tongue a prerequisite for a surprisingly limited number of rituals, although over time the idea gained prominence whilst the positive appreciation of non-Hebrew languages, as well as the use of phonetic etymologies, would dissipate (later midrashim repeat earlier instances but do not create new ones).

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: to explore the evidence for and the impact of the multilingual environment on the uses and functions of languages in Jewish society; to discuss the extent and level at which the majority of the population might have switched between languages; and to delineate rabbinic ideas for the function and use of specific languages, mainly Aramaic. Greek, already discussed in connection with the holy tongue above, will receive further attention as regards its status for Scriptural texts in Chapter Five. Inevitably, the answers given vary by region

and society, but what I hope will surface at the end of this chapter is an understanding that the rabbis increasingly placed a premium on the use of Hebrew in defiance of vernacular languages, and that they thereby stamped the pattern of hermeneutics and also predisposed the liturgy for the Hebrew language.

Key to understanding rabbinic thought on languages and their contexts is not just a map of the Jewish languages but an assessment of the use, command, function and valuation of languages in Jewish society, however fraught with difficulties the appraisal is. In what follows I will highlight the following topics: the difficulty of determining which use and function languages had in the Jewish society of Roman Palestine on the basis of our evidence, with particular reference to epigraphy (section 3.1); the popular command of Hebrew versus the demise of vernacular Hebrew, with particular reference to the problematic evidence of our literary sources (section 3.2); code-switching between languages at various levels and in various formats, with particular attention to the question of representativeness (section 3.3); the context of translation for language selection (the court, the street, the academy, etc.), which defines its functional use in rabbinic eyes (section 3.4); and the controversial status of Aramaic for liturgical use in Roman Palestine with particular reference to the Amida-prayer (section 3.5).

3.1 Epigraphy and the use of languages

Throughout the first half of the first millennium CE Greek was the dominant Jewish language in the Western Diaspora and Aramaic in the Eastern Diaspora, with a highly restricted knowledge and use of Hebrew as a secondarily acquired language, especially in Babylonia, in addition to other, local vernaculars, such as Latin in the Roman Empire or Persian under Sasanian rule. The linguistic difference between these loosely defined areas has recently been stressed to argue that the Western Diaspora Jews did not partake in rabbinic culture because they had no opportunity to receive the oral tradition in languages that they did not command, namely Hebrew and Aramaic.¹ In the East, Babylonian Jews used Aramaic as

¹A. Edrei and D. Mendels, 'A Split Jewish Diaspora: Its Dramatic Consequences', *JSP* 16 (2007), pp. 91–137 and *JSP* 17 (2008), pp. 163–87; A. Edrei and D. Mendels, *Zweierlei Diaspora* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

their main language at vernacular level as well as for literary and magical purposes, quite possibly coupled to a rudimentary knowledge of local Arabic or other vernaculars. Scholars and the well-educated would know Hebrew, with some of them undoubtedly mastering additional languages such as Greek or Persian. Yet there is no denying that this generalization masks our ignorance of the actual linguistic versatility of Babylonian Jews, whose community is largely hidden from view through the absence of any reliable historical sources beyond the Talmud, the incantation bowls and incidental literary references in Syriac. We should also recognize that the divisions are not so clear-cut throughout the Ancient Near East, especially in border areas. In the Roman provinces of Syria, Euphratensis, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, Aramaic's heartland, the majority of Jews indubitably spoke Aramaic, as in Arabia, but it seems likely that Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew were used by Jewish inhabitants. Aramaic, if not the vernacular, served as a *lingua franca*, but Greek, as the language of the administration, had penetrated the region to the extent that Syriac religious leaders wrote and spoke the language,² so it seems reasonable to surmise that Greek will also have left its impact on the local Jewish elite. More speculative is any Jewish knowledge of Hebrew in these regions, although obeisance to the Tora suggests at least some minimal working knowledge, with the odd inscription thrown in for proof. More questionable remains the extent of Jewish command of both Greek and Hebrew. That there are inscriptions and documents in all three languages is evidenced for the Roman province of Arabia.³

In Egypt our evidence for language use is only marginally better. Inscriptions and papyri in Greek, left behind by the Jewish community of Alexandria, together with the translation of Tanakh into Greek and the lack of positive evidence for the use of Hebrew in the period under consideration, all suggest that Greek had become the adoptive language of at least the Alexandrian Jews. While some knowledge of Hebrew would seem likely, there is little evidence for it; that Philo knew Hebrew seems highly unlikely.⁴ On the other hand, Aramaic had long been the staple

²F. Millar, 'A Rural Jewish Community in Late Roman Mesopotamia, and the Question of a Split Jewish Diaspora', *JSJ* 42 (2011), pp. 351–74.

³D. Noy and H. Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones. Iudaicae Orientis*, III, Syria and Cyprus (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2004), pp. 52–59.

⁴See p. 17 n. 25 above.

language of Jews flocking to Egypt, a circumstance that would not change until well into the Islamic period, and in addition to Aramaic the Egyptian language, Demotic, while disappearing from the documentary evidence when Greek became the language of administration, presumably continued as both a vernacular and learned language for quite a few centuries, which leaves open the possibility that some Jews were also familiar with the language.⁵ A few Jewish documents in Aramaic have turned up: a marriage contract dated to 417 CE,⁶ an amulet and a fragment of a recipe collection both found in Oxyrhynchus and dating to the fifth or sixth century CE.⁷ Even more tantalizing is a set of magical fragments in Aramaic found together with a Coptic magical codex and Greek magical papyri likewise dating to the fifth or sixth centuries CE.⁸ The choice of language in these documents may have been governed by considerations other than local vernacular understanding, all the more so since the marriage contract represents the first Egyptian document to be dated according to the Jewish calendar rather than that of the non-Jewish administration,⁹ which raises the possibility of the documents or their owners having come down to Egypt. The Coptic and Aramaic magical texts do not prove anything but the activity of an Aramaic scribe; the efficacy of these would not have depended on the understanding of the scribes' clients.

Still, throughout the Diaspora the Jewish community tends to have a dominant first language, either Aramaic or Greek, with minority languages, sometimes spoken by new immigrants, or secondarily acquired languages to complement. By contrast, the language map of Roman Palestine is far less apparent, with ample evidence for the widespread use of Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek in a variety of contexts, a variety of dialects and a range of functions for each of these languages (passing over the minority languages). Chiefly for the first two centuries CE we are left won-

⁵The evidence cited by S.I. Lee, *Jesus and Gospel Traditions in Bilingual Context: A Study in the Interdirectionality of Language* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 159–60, is from the 4th–3rd c. BCE.

⁶C. Sirat et al., *La Ketouba de Cologne: un contrat de mariage juif à Antinoopolis* (Papyrologica Coloniensia, 12; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986).

⁷G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 166–67.

⁸P. Marrassini, 'I frammenti aramici', *Studi Classici e Orientali* 29 (1979), pp. 125–30.

⁹S. Stern, 'The Babylonian Calendar at Elephantine', *ZPE* 130 (2000), pp. 159–71 (159 n. 6).

dering which language was whose first tongue, with only a slightly more transparent situation in the following centuries when Aramaic became the dominant vernacular, Hebrew lost its vernacular status but retained its status as a religious and literary language, while Greek remained the language of the administration, Hellenistic cities and an ever-growing non-Jewish population.

The functional and sociological distribution of these languages and dialects resulted in a prolonged socio-linguistic debate that produced many insights yet ultimately ended in a stalemate. At first the model of diglossia, with high and low languages for separate functions, seemed relevant given the continued existence of high and low languages throughout the modern Middle East, but initial optimism wavered when the application of socio-linguistic models to the Palestinian language map turned out to be too tortuous to accommodate Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek each in its rightful place. Forcing the triplet into a diglossia model (a triglossia model was proposed, but did not really explain much) always required an adjustment or reduction for one of these languages: Greek as a high, sophisticated language, which somehow stood apart from Hebrew and Aramaic; or Hebrew–Aramaic as a twin joined at the hip that could accordingly be contrasted as a single unity to Greek, hence be forced into a diglossia model; or, finally, Hebrew standing apart as a language of the past and the liturgy with Aramaic and Greek providing the members of the diglossia.

Even apart from the specific problems that arise in a model that should but cannot allow for three languages, any model tends to be thwarted by the colloquial and literary varieties of each of these three languages that also have to be taken on board. In point of fact, some applications of the model proposed Hebrew–Hebrew or Aramaic–Aramaic pairs of high and low languages! In truth, our knowledge of spoken dialects is lacunary. The study of Neo-Aramaic has taught us how vast the variety of spoken dialects is and how capricious the patterns of dialectal variation are geographically (and ethnically). The socio-linguistic function of the relevant dialects stumps any attempt at resolving the problem of language distribution. The question is not merely about what languages were spoken, read and written, but equally important is the question who wrote, read, or ‘spoke what to whom and when’ and where.¹⁰ Yet these questions

¹⁰Paraphrasing J. Fishman, ‘Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?’, *La Linguistique* 2 (1965), pp. 67–88.

retain their relevance—despite the remote chance of firm answers—for the influence of widespread conjectures about what people did or did not understand when reading or listening to the Hebrew Scriptures, halakhic debate, populist preaching, commissioning legal deeds or simply being confronted with inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek on their synagogue floors.

All this leads us to the uneven nature of our sources as evidence for language use, including epigraphy, onomastics, legal deeds and other documents discovered in the Judean desert, literary works (sidestepping the later date of most manuscript evidence for the moment), literary references to language use and comprehension, and linguistic evidence for language interference. None of these sources is as straightforward as it may seem in its interpretation. One of the common problems of studies in the linguistic diversity of the Ancient Near East is the (lack of) distinction between language use, domain and reach. Inferences from Late Antique epigraphy as a source of evidence for language use in Jewish society is a case in point.¹¹ Linguistic competence in Late Antique Palestine certainly cannot be directly extrapolated from religious incentives, epigraphs, or specific language functions, because language selection tends to be governed by certain conventions. Inscriptions have a public function, hence do not adequately reveal private language use—even under circumstances in which they would not normally be visible or accessible to the public, because function and tradition determine the use of language. Since epigraphical language selection does not reflect the vernacular of those who commissioned or executed the inscription,¹² it does not inform us about ‘informal bilingualism in action’,¹³ but about the use of formalized language.

¹¹ See now H.M. Cotton (ed.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palestinae: A Multi-lingual Corpus of the Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad*, 1, Jerusalem, Part 1: 1–704 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010).

¹² W.V. Harris, ‘Literacy and Epigraphy 1’, *ZPE* 52 (1983), pp. 87–111; J. Reynolds, ‘The Greek of Inscriptions’, in P. Easterling and C. Handley (eds.), *Greek Scripts: An Illustrated Introduction* (London: Society for Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 2001), pp. 11–21; A.E. Cooley, *Becoming Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West* (Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series, 48; Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2002).

¹³ J.N. Adams, ‘Bilingualism at Delos’, in Adams, Janse and Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society*, pp. 103–27 (125); cf. M. Leiwo, ‘From Contact to Mixture: Bilingual

As a result, the evidence is highly susceptible of distortion when taken as straightforward evidence for language command. Can we really establish on the basis of a Syriac–Hebrew inscription that ‘there was no insurmountable linguistic barrier dividing the Jews of Arabia, eastern Syria, the Euphrates valley and Osrhoene from their fellow Jews in Palestine’?¹⁴ It is not that one swallow does not make a summer, but that the nature of our epigraphic evidence complicates attempts to extrapolate the use of languages in Jewish society. Of the inscriptions found to date in Judaea and Palestina an estimated 60 to 70 per cent are written in Greek, a number which changes significantly when the evidence is limited to the synagogue inscriptions, of which approximately only one third are written in Greek.¹⁵ If we accept for the sake of argument that these data are statistically relevant, do the languages reflect the mother tongues of Palestinian Jews—with Greek occupying a far more central position than most scholars would allow? Such readings of the evidence are problematic. An illustration is the vernacular of the Nabataeans, who presumably spoke a form of Arabic, which was rarely written before the emergence of Islam.¹⁶ Their inscriptions—they did not leave a literary corpus behind—inform us about the use of Nabataean Aramaic for formal purposes, yet a handful of these contain Arabic and Arabic loanwords, which betray their true vernacular. As Hoyland remarks, ‘this realm was a polyglot entity with different peoples in different regions speaking different languages and dialects, but with Aramaic used by all as the official language irrespective of whether they were Aramaic speakers or not’.¹⁷ Conversely, in Christian Palestine, Aramaic speakers were numerous during the Byzantine period,

Inscriptions from Italy’, in Janse, Adams and Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society*, pp. 168–94.

¹⁴ So Millar, ‘A Rural Jewish Community’, p. 368.

¹⁵ W. Eck, *Rom und Judaea: Fünf Vorträge zur römischen Herrschaft in Palästina* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 157–200 (170); P.W. van der Horst, ‘Greek in Jewish Palestine in Light of Jewish Epigraphy’, in J.J. Collins and G.E. Sterling (eds.), *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Series Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, 13; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 154–74.

¹⁶ J.F. Healey, ‘Were the Nabataeans Arabs?’, *Aram* 1 (1989), pp. 38–44 (43); R. Hoyland, ‘Language and Identity: The Twin Histories of Arabic and Aramaic (and: Why did Aramaic Succeed where Greek Failed?)’, *Scripta Israelica Classica* 23 (2004), pp. 183–200 (183–86). Contrast Millar, *The Roman Near East*, p. 402.

¹⁷ Hoyland, ‘Language and Identity’, p. 186.

but inscriptions were usually written in Greek, especially in the urban areas, with more Aramaic ones turning up in the countryside.¹⁸ Yet even in a Hellenistic town such as Scythopolis at the end of the third century CE, Procopius read the Scriptures in Greek and translated them into Aramaic according to the Syriac version of Eusebius' *De martyribus Palaestinae*.¹⁹ About a century later the Gallic pilgrim Egeria²⁰ reports that the local bishop of Jerusalem 'may know Aramaic, but he never uses it. He always speaks in Greek and has a presbyter beside him who translates his words into Aramaic so that everyone can understand what he means',²¹ a practice reminiscent of the Jewish bilingual reading of the Tora in Hebrew and Aramaic from the second century CE onward.

So generalizations on the basis of Hebrew inscriptions, which have turned up all over Late Antique Roman Europe, from (most recently) Portugal and Spain to Sicily, are problematic because they do not linearly reflect the linguistic patterns of the Jewish communities and societies that left them behind.

Another difficulty with our evidence is the social representation in the inscriptions: do they reflect a representative cross-section of Jewish society, or those classes which could afford the considerable costs of epitaphs and tombs? Parity between vernacular and epigraphical language is sometimes assumed on the basis of faulty Greek in many of the less expensive inscriptions, which would seem to suggest that knowledge of Greek extended to the lower, less-educated classes.²² However, grammatical deficiency does not necessarily point to the lower classes or less

¹⁸ Hoyland, 'Language and Identity', pp. 187–88.

¹⁹ G. Mussies, 'Greek in Palestine and the Diaspora', in S. Safrai et al. (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (CRINT, 1, 2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), pp. 1040–64 (1059).

²⁰ H. Sivan, 'Holy Land Pilgrimage and Western Audiences: Some Reflections on Egeria and Her Circle', *The Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988), pp. 528–35 (534).

²¹ J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem and Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1981), p. 146.

²² E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1965), vol. 2, p. 123; B. Lifshitz, 'L'hellénisation des juifs de Palestine propos des inscriptions de Besara (Beth Shearim)', *RB* 72 (1965), pp. 520–38; Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, p. 30; L.Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: The Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), p. 13; Van der Horst, 'Greek in Jewish Palestine', pp. 159–62, 166; H. Cotton and A. Yardeni, *Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek Texts from Nahal Hever and*

educated individuals, since such flaws are an established result of code-switching in a bilingual society.²³ Rather, these flaws reflect imperfect language acquisition. Whether they reflect a socio-linguistic low variety of language use,²⁴ thus a stable variety of Greek, cannot be determined on the basis of individual documents or texts, but must be established structurally. It is not impossible that variation of language may also reflect socio-cultural distinctions; the Greek synagogue inscriptions appear to fall into one of two categories: those in Aramaic, Hebrew, or 'Greek with many Semitic features that often utilize similar literary formulae', and those composed in Koine Greek without Semitic features.²⁵ The first group occurs mainly in those regions known to be 'Jewish', which may suggest that, in this instance at least, there is a link between the languages used in the inscription and the cultural affiliations of the commissioners—although it remains unclear whether, by extension, the languages selected for the inscriptions reflect those used in the synagogue.

The disparity between the languages used in inscriptions and the common vernacular also occurs elsewhere in the Roman Empire, as between Greek and Latin in Delos.²⁶ Not unlike the situation in medieval Southern Italy, where the epigraphic and literary use of Hebrew from the seventh century CE onwards hardly reflects the use of Hebrew in daily life but rather points to the status of Hebrew as an ethnic marker, the holy tongue and the learned language spoken by a small scholarly elite.²⁷ Whilst the use of Hebrew dominated by the ninth century CE in Southern Italy in

Other Sites with an Appendix Containing Alleged Qumran Texts [The Seiyi Collection 2] (DJD, 27; Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 136–37, 206–208.

²³J. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 305–308.

²⁴So S.E. Porter, 'The Functional Distribution of Koine Greek in First-Century Palestine', in S.E. Porter, *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 53–78 (60).

²⁵S. Fine, 'Synagogue Inscriptions', in E.M. Meyers (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 114–18 (114).

²⁶Adams, 'Bilingualism at Delos', pp. 103–27; Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*, pp. 642–86.

²⁷Leiwo, 'From Contact to Mixture'. See further D. Noy, 'The Jews in Italy in the First to Sixth Centuries C.E.', in B.D. Cooperman and B. Garvin (eds.), *The Jews of Italy: Memory and Identity* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2000), pp. 47–64; C. Colafemmina, 'Hebrew Inscriptions of the Early Medieval Period in Southern Italy', in Cooperman and Garvin (eds.), *The Jews of Italy*, pp. 65–81; J. Schirrmann, 'The Beginning of Hebrew Poetry

both epigraphy and literature, the vernacular remained Latin or Greek. By analogy, the predominant use of Greek in Roman Palestine may be nothing more than a conventional expression in the most prestigious language, which would evolve into the language of Church and State in Byzantine Palestine.²⁸ Significantly, the proportion of Greek inscriptions rises wherever Roman power is established.²⁹ All in all, inscriptions should not be misconstrued as a signal for the vernacular, since epigraphical language selection is governed by political factors, social status, and cultural identity, for which the language of high prestige is the unmarked choice, whereas the selection of other languages is much more remarkable.³⁰ Much more could (and should!) be said on the regional, chronological and dialectal differentiation of the inscriptions, but for my present purposes the point is clear. The use of Hebrew in inscriptions may have served important functions without necessarily being understood even by a small percentage of literate Jews.

3.2 The popular command of Hebrew

Most philologists today agree that the Hebrew vernacular had not vanished entirely in the first few centuries CE, as the colloquial roots and internal development of Mishnaic Hebrew are beyond doubt, despite strong influence from Aramaic.³¹ It is likewise clear that Mishnaic Hebrew betrays a close philological affinity with the Hebrew Bar Kokhba letters, although the two dialects are not entirely identical, nor is Mishnaic Hebrew entirely uniform itself.³² But there are still questions about the domain of Mishnaic Hebrew, of which the colloquial features do not necessarily prove to what extent it was actually spoken as a daily tongue in the second

in Italy and Northern Europe', in C. Roth (ed.), *The World History of the Jewish People*, II, *The Dark Ages* (Tel-Aviv: Massadah Publishing, 1966), pp. 249–66.

²⁸F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408–450)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 97.

²⁹Eck, *Rom und Judaea*, p. 172.

³⁰Hoyland, 'Language and Identity', p. 192 n. 34.

³¹M. Bar Asher, 'Mishnaic Hebrew: An Introductory Survey', in Safrai et al. (eds.), *Literature of the Sages*, II, pp. 567–95; I. Young and R. Rezetko, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London: Equinox, 2008), pp. 223–49; E. Bar Asher Siegal, 'Diglossia', in G. Khan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

³²Bar Asher, 'Mishnaic Hebrew', pp. 578–81.

to third centuries CE since literary language generally tends to reflect the spoken dialect of earlier periods, which renders inferences about the actual use of Mishnaic Hebrew in daily life inconclusive. On the other hand, the persistence of colloquial dialects in pre-modern societies should never be underestimated. The question really is no longer whether Hebrew continued to be a living language amongst certain segments of society, no matter how small, but rather to what extent and degree Hebrew could still be understood in society at large. At this point we must distinguish between scholars, who freely switched between Aramaic and Hebrew, and who created the literary sources from which we take most of our evidence, and the illiterate audience with at best a limited understanding of Hebrew, and all the variety of language skills in between.

Intriguingly, the language of a recently published legal deed in a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew, whose substrate appears to be Aramaic, eludes dialectal identity as demonstrated by Moshe Bar Asher, not just because it switches from Aramaic to Hebrew and back to Aramaic, but primarily because the deed occasionally inflects Hebrew as Aramaic and Aramaic as Hebrew and uses lexemes of each in the other's dialect.³³ Its dialectal nature goes beyond a 'mixed discourse' of two alternating languages, and may well reignite views of Hebrew as an 'intertwined language' or 'langue mélangée' during this period,³⁴ which in some ways would turn back the clock in the debate on its linguistic nature, but it remains to be seen whether the phenomenon is incidental or widespread and whether it is of a literary or also a colloquial nature. It is noteworthy that Hebrew and Aramaic were confused in the literary references of the first century CE, for Josephus and John denote Aramaic words as Hebrew while Philo labels the language of the Tora as Aramaic,³⁵ so there may be more truth to the idea of an intertwined colloquial than we hitherto could have realized. If so, its original speakers were probably fluent in both languages while its use may be caused by the prestige of Hebrew, which could explain the Aramaic substrate as the dominant vernacular

³³ M. Bar Asher, *על-הלשון בשטר מבית עמר*, *Cathedra* 132 (2009), pp. 25–32; for the text and initial analysis, see E. Eshel, H. Eshel, and A. Yardeni, 'שטר מ'שנת ארבע לחורבן בית ישראל'', *Cathedra* 132 (2009), pp. 5–24.

³⁴ J. Fellman, 'The Linguistic Status of Mishnaic Hebrew', *JNSL* 5 (1977), pp. 21–22; Sáenz-Badillos, *History*, p. 164; M. Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), p. 5.

³⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 3.10.6 (252) with Hebrews using Aramaic; John 5.2; Philo, *Vita* 2.7.

with Hebrew as the token language. In one of the Greek letters of Bar Kokhba, P. Yadin 52, the scribe Soumaios apologizes for his inability to communicate in Hebrew, which implies that Greek had not just become a *lingua franca* but the scribe's native tongue. Despite the fact that his Greek is far from perfect, his apology simultaneously expresses a clear preference for Hebrew as the language of choice.³⁶

Besides the Scriptures, Hebrew persisted as the language of halakhic discourse so that most Jews would have been familiar with certain key terms or phrases, some of which entered Aramaic as Hebrew loans, others as calques. Certain phrases were apparently pushed by the rabbis, who were appalled by the use of specific Aramaic terms such as ארנא for the ארון by the עמי הארצות 'common people'; possibly, the term בית קדשא may be included here.³⁷ Obviously, such a minimal knowledge of Hebrew terms, which rabbinic insistence may have generated, does not constitute bilingualism by any definition.³⁸

As with epigraphy, our evidence is not a clear reflection of language command. The occurrence of Hebrew and Aramaic in rabbinic literature and the liturgy is sometimes taken as evidence that these languages were still sufficiently understood to be read in tandem, as was the case with the epigraphic record. But it stands to reason that we cannot infer from the understanding rabbis, interpreters and authors had and reflected in their works to what extent their audiences would likewise have been able to appreciate the bilingual hermeneutics of their efforts. The numinous effect of the holy tongue, especially when not fully grasped, cannot be underestimated. The entire reasoning behind the rules for those scriptural passages that should not be interpreted in the synagogue, but were permitted to be recited in Hebrew, implies that the Hebrew recitation itself was not widely understood,³⁹ regardless of the hermeneutic opportunity a translation would have allowed the rabbis. As noted in the previous chapter in connection with the ritual of the first fruits and other rituals, the rabbis

³⁶B. Rochette, 'Le SB VIII 9843 et la position du grec en Palestine aux deux premiers siècles après J.-C.', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 44 (1998), pp. 42–46.

³⁷L.I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989), p. 114; Shinan, 'The Aramaic Targum', pp. 241–51 (250).

³⁸See J. Edwards, 'Foundations of Bilingualism', in T.K. Bhatia and W.C. Ritchie (eds.), *The Handbook of Bilingualism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 7–31.

³⁹For these rules, see section 5.3 below.

made provisions for those who did not speak or understand Hebrew when the use of Hebrew was indispensable.

That a Jewish audience would have understood Hebrew sufficiently well to follow a halakhic discourse is sometimes inferred from the narrative in b. Pes. 42a,⁴⁰ where R. Mattena teaches in a village close to Pumbeditha (cited after MS ColX):

אמ' רב יהודה אשה לא תלוש אלא במים שלנו דרשה רב מתנה בפאפיניה⁴¹ איתו כולי
עלמא חצביהו ואתי לגביהו⁴² אמ' להו אנא במיא⁴³ ביאתי אמרי
Said Rav Yehuda, A woman must knead [unleavened bread] only with water
which remained overnight. R. Mattena taught this at Papunia. Everyone took
their pitchers and turned to him. Said he to them, 'I meant with water which
remained overnight'.

Rav Yehuda rules that water used for kneading unleavened bread should be kept indoors, so the water could cool off and would not induce fermentation.⁴⁴ The anecdote reveals that the audience understood שלנו not as 'which has spent overnight', derived from the verb לון, hence water which stayed indoors overnight, but as the possessive pronoun שלנו 'which belongs to us', spelled and pronounced in exactly the same way. Rav Mattena's explanation in Aramaic resolves the ambiguity. Though comic as an illustration of how homophonous words can easily be misunderstood, these words do not prove that he lectured entirely in Hebrew,⁴⁵ for he may well have sprinkled Hebrew loans into his discourse, as is far from unusual in rabbinic literature. But even on the assumption that he spoke in Hebrew only, the actual misunderstanding reveals the limited Hebrew of his audience, for we must assume that Rav Mattena explained (דרשה)

⁴⁰ So Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 276 n. 53, following E.Y. Kutscher.

⁴¹ Preceded by למחר 'the next morning' in Rab1608, Mun95, Val9, Vat134, and the edns; ColX is supported by Rab1623, Mun6, Ox23, Vat109 and Vat125. Mun95 reads הלילה דרשה רב מתנה, while Vat134 repeats the teaching at this point: למחר שלנו במים אלא תלוש אשה לא תלוש אלא במים שלנו למחר.

⁴² Ox23, Vil and Ven have a typical explanatory gloss at this point: ואמרו ליה הב לן מיא 'and they demanded of him, Give us water'.

⁴³ Rab1623 reads במאנא 'in a vessel' instead of במיא.

⁴⁴ So Rashi, referring to b. Pes. 94b, with a mythological explanation for the higher temperature of water in deep wells.

⁴⁵ Only Vat134 includes the Hebrew teaching of Rav Yehuda in the words of R. Mattena (see n. 41 above), but this is absent from ColX, Rab1608, Rab1623, Mun6, Mun95, Ox23, Val9, Vat109, Vat125 and the edns and appears to be a gloss.

why the water had to stay overnight. The error of homophony could only occur if his audience could not relate מים שלנו to his exposition.

Even rabbis did not always fully understand certain Hebrew words, or so suggest several stories of rabbis who embarked upon 'linguistic field research'.⁴⁶ These narratives list occasions on which rabbis inferred the meaning of biblical or mishnaic lemmata by tuning into the speech of people in the market, Rabbi's maidservant, a sea-port, certain towns or foreign places.⁴⁷ It should be noted at the outset that not all of the words at issue were obscure. There is in these lists a mixture of two distinct processes: language acquisition and etymological or semantic interpretation. These processes, though similar in method, have different goals. The first concerns the lexical meaning of an obscure and rare word which is recovered by tuning into etymologically similar words in other languages where they are used in context and their meaning can accordingly be established. The second, however, utilizes foreign etymologies to generate additional meanings for already well-established words, which, as Cohen remarks, 'are used with apparent fluency and facility' elsewhere.⁴⁸ The latter process recalls the use of foreign etymology on the assumption of the linguistic kinship of all languages and is primarily found in the Bavli; the former is found in the Yerushalmi and Genesis Rabba.

As with the exegetical traditions based on foreign etymologies, it seems that linguistic street examples were collected and transmitted, sometimes with further modifications. Consider, for example, the lexical illumination of קשיטה 'weight, coin' in Gen. 33.19 provided in b. R. Hash. 26b: 'Said R. Aqiva, When I went to Africa⁴⁹ they would call a מעה ['coin'] a קשיטה'. The word קשיטה is indeed rare, and its meaning in modern lexicography, which agrees with the semantic interpretation of R. Aqiva, is derived from Arabic cognates.⁵⁰ The LXX and TgOnq interpret the word as 'lamb' (χόρην, חורפן), supported by Vulg (agnis) and Pesh (نقمة), while TgNeof, FragTg^{PV} and TgPsJ have 'pearl' (מרגלית). The same semantic quest occurs in Gen. R. 79.7, among other such stories, where it is tagged onto Gen. 33.19. In

⁴⁶The term is used in A. Cohen, 'The Task of Talmud: On Talmud as Translation', in A. den Hollander, U. Schmid and W. Smelik (eds.), *Paratext and Megatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions* (JCP, 6; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 82–108 (101–106).

⁴⁷See y. Meg. 2.2, 73a; y. Shevi. 9.1, 38c; Gen. R. 79.7; b. Meg. 18a; b. R. Hash. 26b.

⁴⁸Cohen, 'The Task of Talmud', p. 106.

⁴⁹For אפריקי as 'Phrygia', see Alexander, *Toponymy*, pp. 106–108.

⁵⁰Cf. HALAT, III, p. 1073.

this narrative R. Hiyya Rabba and R. Shimon b. Ḥalaftha go to the Arabs' market to learn the meaning of certain words which they forgot from the translation (שכחון מילין מן התרגום). Since the *midrash* generates Aramaic equivalents, the translation they forgot, which served as their first port of call in any semantic query, was in Aramaic, of which they did not possess a written exemplar for consultation, as they accessed it instead through memory. The verses elucidated in their research include Mal. 3.21, Isa. 49.21, Isa. 14.23, and Gen. 33.19, all of which would almost certainly have been available in targumic form, and Ps. 55.23 and Job 3.8, for which no (accepted) Targum may have existed at the time. These rabbis, who are from Sepphoris or its vicinity, do not enquire among fellow rabbis or local Jews, but reportedly repair to the Arab market, where they learn an Aramaic word for diamonds and sheep:

אשאל לי מרגליתין אשאל לי כסירתין אפיק חדא אימרתא למרעייה אפיק חדא כסירתה למרעייה אמר ר' אבא בר כהנא במאה אנאקות במאה טלאים במאה סלעים [For] 'Lend me your diamonds' [they heard] 'Lend me כסירתין'. [For] 'Lead out this sheep to pasture' [they heard] 'Lead out this כסירתין to the pasture'.

Said R. Abba b. Kahana, For a hundred jewels, a hundred sheep, and a hundred coins.

The *midrash* parses כסירתין and קשיטה as if these were the same words, despite the fact that all consonants differ. That is not unusual in etymological interpretations, as we have seen, and the stark difference is reduced when we consider that ר may indicate sonoric lengthening, hence the pronunciation of both words came closer than it seems to do. The textual history of Gen. R. shows that כסירתין > כסיתתן⁵¹ > כסיתה. The meaning of כסיתה is obscure, although from the *midrash* it would follow that it denotes both 'diamond' and 'sheep'.⁵²

The comparison is between biblical קשיטה and vernacular כסירתין, with the latter word understood in context as denoting both 'pearls' and 'sheep'. These two meanings for biblical קשיטה are confirmed by a tradition ascribed to the Palestinian Amora R. Abba b. Kahana, who equates the value of the jewels and sheep but adds a third equivalent, 'coins'. His third interpretation of קשיטה is semantically similar to R. Aqiva's but not identical, as the מעה is a twentieth part of a סלע according to TgOnq Exod. 30.13. These three meanings of biblical קשיטה are also listed in its

⁵¹With a 'pleonastic' ending that is otherwise more typical of Babylonian Aramaic.

⁵²No suggestion is even attempted in Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 265.

threefold translation in TgJob 42.11: *מעא ואית דאמרי מרגליתא ואיכא דאמרי* (following R. Aqiva's *מעא*).⁵³ The version with all three equivalents is attested in most witnesses, although some only attest the latter, *חורפא*.⁵⁴ It is quite likely that the latter two variants, which agree with the PalTg and TgOnq respectively, are learned marginal glosses.

The rarity of the equivalence and its roots in contemporary pronunciation may suggest that the linguistic search was authentic in this instance, even though soon no longer understood. Whether the same applies to the narrative of rabbis in dialogue with Rabbi's maidservant is more doubtful. When the Yerushalmi relates how 'the fellows were in doubt [concerning the meaning of] *סירוויס*, *חלולוגות*, and who is greater, the wisest or the oldest',⁵⁵ they infer the meaning of the first two mishnaic words from the way Rabbi's maid uses them in context. The story provides an interesting example of code-switching: the part of the fellows is told in Aramaic, but that of the maid (including her answers) in Hebrew, except when she addresses another maid, for which she resorts to Aramaic. The framework thus suggests that the fellows' native tongue was Aramaic, although they understood Hebrew, whereas the maid's vernacular was Hebrew, although she could also converse in Aramaic. However, the rabbis misunderstand her very first words. When she tells them *הכניסו לשנים* 'enter according to [your] age', which answers the question whether (rabbinic) wisdom takes priority over (rabbinic) age or vice versa, they still cannot agree on the order of entrance, and proceed with interruptions, which leads to the discovery of the meaning of *סירוויס*. How could they have failed to understand her bidding? They lose themselves in modesty, asking one another to enter first. Since we may assume that they would have known their relative age, they appear to have understood *הכניסו לשנים* as 'enter pairwise', confusing *לשנים* and *לשני*.⁵⁶ As a result of this specific misreading they remain in doubt as to who takes priority in entering, which would explain why they did not proceed in order of age. It is significant, however, that what we find

⁵³For the text and variants, see D.M. Stec, *The Text of the Targum of Job: An Introduction and Critical Edition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 307–308. The metatextual comments *ואית דאמרי* and *ואיכא דאמרי* apparently only occur in ms t6, with dots above each word, and t2 (Stec, *Targum of Job*, pp. 56, 59).

⁵⁴So MSS t702, t703, t816, t12 and t10r. Conversely, t189 only reads *מעא*.

⁵⁵y. Meg. 2.2, 73a; y. Shevi. 9.1, 38c. See n. 47 above.

⁵⁶So too Levy, WTM, III, p. 586.

here is a misreading rather than an aural misapprehension, which gives at least this part of the episode the flavour of a literary construction. There may be more literary irony in the circumstance that the very first reported word which the rabbis do not understand, סירוגין, is only used in m. Meg. 2.2, with the result that the rabbis did not understand the first Hebrew word following the decision in the previous mishna (2.1) that the Megilla should be read in Hebrew instead of a vernacular.

3.3 The forms of code-switching

With all the confusion over the exact use of languages in their literary and colloquial varieties in Roman Palestine, Aramaic is widely held to have been the most commonly used vernacular. Obversely, the selection of Aramaic for literary or halakhic use appears to have been circumscribed in the first half of the first millennium CE, although the attested use is incoherent. The allocation of languages in the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests an almost exclusive use of Hebrew for halakhic and liturgical purposes, notwithstanding the existence of literary works such as the books of Enoch and the Genesis Apocryphon that were written in Aramaic but are often believed to have antedated the life and activity of the community.⁵⁷ Hebrew remained the liturgical language *par excellence*, although some (individual) parts of the rabbinic liturgy were, and still are, in Aramaic, while early rabbinic discussions allows other languages, primarily Greek, for some of the most pivotal parts.

Similarly, in the Second Temple period the officials who oversaw the offerings brought by the people used Aramaic, although the Mishna, after stating that certain administrative seals were written in Aramaic, quotes the first two in Aramaic (עגל דכרי), while the third could be either Hebrew or Aramaic (גדי), but the fourth is quoted in Hebrew (חוטא; m. Sheq. 5.3).⁵⁸ Note that Albeck's edition also reads the first two in Hebrew despite the marker 'Aramaic'. In the same tractate we encounter a list of words which

⁵⁷D.K. Falk, *The Parabiblical Texts: Strategies for Extending the Scriptures among the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), p. 29; E. Tigchelaar, 'Aramaic Texts from Qumran and the Authoritativeness of Hebrew Scriptures: Preliminary Observations', in M. Popović (ed.), *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 155–72 (155–57). See also p. 97 n. 146 above.

⁵⁸So ms Kaufman A 50, supported by Cod. Parm3173 (with עגל דכרי, not עגל דקר).

were written on the thirteen shofar chests in the Temple, beginning with Aramaic only to continue in Hebrew (m. Sheq. 6.5).⁵⁹ The translation into Hebrew implies that speakers and authors freely switched between Hebrew and Aramaic during the transmission of these traditions, ergo that other portions in the Mishna may at one point not have been worded in Hebrew either. As a consequence, language switches do not have to be considered functional by default, because they may simply be due to vicissitude; no one tried to impose a single language on the mishnaic Temple terms, neither Hebrew nor Aramaic.

Both languages may have been regarded as interchangeable in the early period, but plausibly less so later on. It is significant that the textual history of the Qaddish suggests a bilingual text throughout the verifiable history of its textual transmission on the basis of manuscript evidence and literary quotations or parallels.⁶⁰ Admittedly, it does not necessarily follow from its reception that this prayer was bilingual from its very inception, given the long incubation period of its textual consolidation. Still, whether original or not, its prolonged bilingual transmission indicates that code-switching between the two languages was deemed perfectly acceptable, which comes as no surprise given that such code-switching occurs in many rabbinic sources as well as in magic texts found in the Cairo Geniza. As in the case of the Mishna, this instance of code-switching does not appear to have any particular function, although the Qaddish of the rabbis has been worded in Hebrew, which is hardly coincidental. Magic texts switch between Hebrew and Aramaic without any clear pattern, sometimes mid-sentence, although liturgical formulas and prayers tend to be in Hebrew while *segullot* gravitate towards Aramaic, but neither exclusively so.⁶¹

Elsewhere code-switching may signify more than serendipity, but it is important to stress that the nature of code-switching in our sources is not all of one piece. Not only does the highly performative nature of biblical recitation with its oral-Aramaic 'shadow' stand apart in its clear functional differentiation of languages, but the use of more than one language in inscriptions or legal documents also differs from the

⁵⁹Kaufman A 50 and Parm3173 continue with קייים, edn Albeck reads קנין.

⁶⁰A. Lehnardt, *Qaddish: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Rezeption eines rabbinischen Gebets* (TSAJ, 87; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

⁶¹P. Schäfer and S. Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, II (TSAJ, 64; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), p. 22.

code-switching in rabbinic literature. To begin with the latter, the use of Aramaic is particularly found in popular stories, sayings and lamentations, as well as the discourse that frames halakhic discussions—besides the public works of the Aramaic Bible translations which were meant to be used in tandem with the Hebrew source text only. Sometimes the shifts from Aramaic to Hebrew, or inversely, follow no apparent principle, as in *Leviticus Rabba*, with the exception that this Midrash tends to report dialogue in the local colour of Galilean Aramaic, while it also casts many folk-elements, fables, and animal stories in Aramaic,⁶² and thus reflects the language of daily life. The framework of *Midrash Lamentations*, on the other hand, is cast in Hebrew while many of its folkloric elements are couched in Aramaic. Conversely, the frequent quotations of halakhic precedents in the Talmudim (מעשים) are all expressed in Hebrew,⁶³ as are halakhic statements generally. It is conceivable that the rabbis discussed matters of halakha in Aramaic, but only used Hebrew for its formulation, just as many of the halakhic precedents, or מעשים, may have been based on Aramaic narratives adopted and linguistically adapted for halakhic use to conform to the genre as it has been phrased in the Bavli. Neusner took this apparently functional differentiation of language one step further by providing a taxonomic explanation for the phenomenon of bilingualism in the Bavli: what is written in Hebrew is authoritative, and what is written in Aramaic is tantamount to analysis, inquiry and criticism.⁶⁴ Attractive as his explanation is that the use of language signals a difference of authority and function, he does not sufficiently explain all language shifts in the Bavli and far more research into rabbinic code-switching (and

⁶² B.L. Visotzky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates: Studies in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (TSAJ, 94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 41–47.

⁶³ On the use of the term מעשה, see A.M. Goldberg, 'Form und Funktion des Ma'a'se in der Mischna', *FJB* 2 (1974), pp. 1–38 (republished in A. Goldberg, *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung: Gesammelte Studien* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999], vol. 2); P. Segal, 'Jewish Law During Tannaitic Period', in N.S. Hecht et al., *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law* (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 101–40 (106).

⁶⁴ See J. Neusner, *Language as Taxonomy: The Rules for Using Hebrew and Aramaic in the Babylonian Talmud* (SFSHJ, 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); J. Neusner, *How to Study the Bavli: The Languages, Literatures, and Lessons of the Talmud of Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), pp. 17–24. Contrast A. Cohen, *Rereading Talmud: Gender, Law and the Poetics of Sugyot* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 64–69.

linguistic transpositions between documents) is required to understand the phenomenon in any satisfactory detail.⁶⁵

Quite different is the selection of languages in legal contexts, as some of the rituals in the holy tongue, or not, already indicated. In the so-called 'double documents', which contain the text of a deed in two languages, the co-existence of both languages serves the goal of clarity and above all legal validity where parties in a lawsuit have to understand what the matter is all about in order to render a verdict, witness statement or agreement lawful. Not without reason, the default position in a rabbinic court of law is that those officiating in a legal function should be able to understand litigants in their own vernacular without the intermediacy of interpreters. The Sanhedrin had to hear witnesses without the help of an interpreter, hence the requirement that a would-be member should command seventy languages.⁶⁶ When Rava appointed an interpreter between him and foreign litigants, who presumably spoke Greek (לעזי),⁶⁷ his anomalous behaviour elicited the defence that he could understand what they said but could not reply to them in their own language.⁶⁸ Similarly, interpreters were allowed for the annulment of vows on the basis of a precedent of R. Ba b. Zutra, who established the interpreter of R. Yoḥanan in the case of a woman who did not understand Aramaic.⁶⁹ These instances show that this ruling could have been relaxed in real life. Even the ritual of the *sotā*, which should not be conducted through an interpreter according to tannaitic sources, was allowed in this manner according to one voice in Num. R. 9.34. The reality of the rabbinic court of law may well have been less lofty, but the principle nonetheless reflects an important ideal, which is also born out by the existence of the legal 'double documents'.⁷⁰

What transpires is that language selection may be functional under certain conditions and that context of expression determines language selection to an as yet undefined extent. Individuals would be guided by the cultural and religious aspects of language, depending on their local context

⁶⁵ See also, e.g., R. Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine: Decoding the Literary Record* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 49–50, 134, 140, 157.

⁶⁶ See p. 75 n. 93 above.

⁶⁷ Note however my reservations above, p. 34 n. 77.

⁶⁸ b. Mak. 6b.

⁶⁹ y. Ned. 10.10(8), 42a, emending סוריבטין to סוריסטין.

⁷⁰ For these documents, see U. Yiftach-Firanko, 'Who Killed the Double Document in Ptolemaic Egypt?', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 54 (2009), pp. 203–18.

and level of acculturation. Since the evidence suggests that language was not part of Jewish identity,⁷¹ the desire and opportunity to learn a second language will have depended on individual circumstances. As the language of the priestly elite, closely related to the Temple up to its very last days, Hebrew bestowed a considerable amount of prestige on both those who used 'the language of the sanctuary' and on texts written in this ancient language. Since the exclusivity of Hebrew for religious purposes received increasing emphasis in rabbinic literature, any Jew may have acquired some rudimentary Hebrew, which did not necessarily go beyond the ability to recite certain short passages such as the Shema. We cannot, however, construe this ability as evidence for an ongoing, societal multilingualism which included Hebrew.

As with the epigraphic evidence, the literary bilingualism of Talmud, Midrash and liturgical texts may be cited as proof of a far more widespread bilingualism of Hebrew and Aramaic, adducing further support in the form of multilingual puns in the Midrashim and the apparent bilingual focus of the Targumim. Such inferences are true as far as they concern the text, but for any socio-linguistic and historical conclusions much depends on who and what these texts represent. To illustrate the problem we may look at the linguistic conclusions that are sometimes drawn from the specific translational nature of the Targums. The commensal nature of the Targums points to the Hebrew source as a present text, which has often been understood as a pointer to their bilingual scope. As an aside in a study of the Septuagint, Rabin perceived the origin of the Targums in 'monolingual hermeneutics':

A translation of the type of the Targum to the Prophets makes little sense unless the listener also understood the source text without its help, as otherwise all the ingenious allusions would be so much wasted effort.⁷²

Perceptive as his comment is for the character of the Targums as texts, his argument assumes not just that the bi-textual intricacies were *meant* to be understood by each and everyone, from the scholar down to the illiterate, but also that they *were* indeed understood. Even though Targum is more than a translation, it is one thing to point out how it is tangled

⁷¹ Stern, *Jewish Identity*, p. 79.

⁷² C. Rabin, 'The Translation Process and the Character of the Septuagint', *Textus* 6 (1968), pp. 1-26 (17); A. Samely, 'Is Targumic Aramaic Rabbinic Hebrew? A Reflection on Midrashic and Targumic Rewording of Scripture', *JJS* 45 (1994), pp. 92-100.

up with the Hebrew source text but quite another to conclude that the synagogue audience could work that all out for themselves. Can we, by way of comparison, really infer from highly intricate allusions in Hebrew *piyyutim* to Tanakh and rabbinic lore that the audience of the *paytanim* was so well-versed in the richness of these sources that it understood and digested the detail and the Hebrew to the tune of a small circle of scholars?⁷³ To infer a general ability to understand Hebrew from such delicate translational or poetic features seems rather unwarranted.

Rather, what Rabin identified is the overarching strategy behind these translations to retain the Hebrew source text as the original point of reference (even if sometimes by subtle substitutions), which produces the typical contrapuntal mechanics of the Aramaic translation.⁷⁴ At the time that these translations were moulded, they may indeed have served to flex the skills of the interpreters for internal translation in rabbinic literature, or, to borrow Visotzky's words, as 'an exercise designed to sharpen linguistic skills, rhetoric, and accuracy of expression'.⁷⁵ But when the Targums stabilized and were (at least in the case Rabin referred to) consolidated, their purpose changed to safeguard the illumination, intelligibility and theological acceptability of the target text. That this strategy was reinforced by actual rules governing the oral-performative translation in the synagogue does not imply that every detail of the allusions would have to be understood. The status of Targum as dependent sibling is itself the message—a message all the more important if only the sibling's language was fully comprehended and thus in danger of being taken for the sole voice. Needless to add, the underlying ties that bind the target text to the source text had to be in place, but they may well have remained the unseen and little understood motor beneath the bonnet for most of the translations' recipients.

⁷³ S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society from 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 264 n. 61.

⁷⁴ W.F. Smelik, 'Translation and Commentary in One: The Interplay of Pluses and Substitutions in the Targum of the Prophets', *JSJ* 29 (1998), pp. 245–60.

⁷⁵ Visotzky, *Golden Bells*, p. 42 n. 7.

3.4 The context of translation

Not without reason some late nineteenth century scholars argued that Palestinian rabbis favoured Aquila's Greek Bible version over the Aramaic translations.⁷⁶ In the early twentieth century, Churgin resisted this view and claimed that, contrary to expectations, Onqelos and Jonathan are in fact quoted in the Yerushalmi and Midrashim. He strengthened his rebuttal of the theory that the Palestinian rabbis did not favour these versions by calling the rabbinic quotations from Aquila's translation into doubt, which had the result that the status of Greek in Palestinian rabbinic circles would hang in the balance.⁷⁷ Cavalier as ever in his references, he failed to substantiate his argument that Onqelos and Jonathan are indeed quoted in the Yerushalmi and the Midrashim.⁷⁸ While Geiger alleged that the earliest Midrashim do not quote Onqelos, and that an isolated quotation in PRE must therefore be deemed doubtful, Churgin's evidence to refute him involves a single quotation from a very late commentary to Gen. R. 45.7 in נבחר מפניי.⁷⁹ A reassessment of the available evidence does not go Churgin's way (see Chapter Eight). Even if references to Aquila in rabbinic literature are not identical with the hexaplaric Aquila, they still testify to the importance attributed to a Greek version among the Palestinian rabbis. Moreover, up to medieval times Aquila remained influential in the Byzantine Diaspora that stood under Palestinian influence, as has been demonstrated by the recovered Judeo-Greek Bible texts from the Cairo Geniza.⁸⁰

All this prompts the question what use and function Palestinian sages envisaged for Aramaic translations of the Holy Writ. At one point, the Yerushalmi states bluntly that the rabbis investigated whether the Tora could be translated into any language other than Greek, and that they

⁷⁶ A. Berliner, *Targum Onkelos* (Berlin: Gorzelanczyk, 1884), I, pp. 108–10; Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, p. 10. For a different assessment, see A. Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judenthums* (2 vols.; Breslau: Julius Hainauer, 1857), pp. 162–69.

⁷⁷ Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, pp. 10–19.

⁷⁸ He refers to Zunz, who advanced a single quotation in the Yerushalmi as evidence; L. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (Frankfurt: J. Kauffmann, 2nd edn, 1892), p. 67 n. b.

⁷⁹ Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen*, p. 164 n. **; Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, p. 11 n. 5.

⁸⁰ See N. de Lange, 'Hebrew/Greek Manuscripts: Some Notes', *JJS* 46 (1995), pp. 262–70; N. de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Geniza* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996).

found it to be impossible (y. Meg. 1.11[8], 71c). This may not have been an isolated opinion in Palestine: in Qoh. R., the *meturgemanim* are twice unfavourably compared to the expositors, the *darshanim*.⁸¹ Obversely, there is no question about the importance of Aramaic as such, since the rabbinic production of texts during the Talmudic period comprises Hebrew and Aramaic, often within the same document, as does the contemporary epigraphic record or the incantation bowls. Wedged between Greek as the language of the administration and culture and of the majority of the population by the end of the Byzantine period, and Hebrew as the religious language, Aramaic was not always favoured as a linguistic vehicle—as Rabbi's position on the use of Aramaic in Palestine vividly illustrates.⁸² Yet it seems unlikely that Tannaim objected to Aramaic as such; rather, it seems, a specific register for Aramaic formed the bone of contention.

Rabbinic views on translation were not monolithic, but varied by context and period. The distinct functions and situations for translational activity played a prominent part in the rabbinic evaluation of language selection, as the linguistic demands on judges referred to above demonstrate. One of the most common and often cited examples of the scope of a translation is the brief note that concludes the section in the Tosefta about the biblical passages that are to be read and interpreted, or not interpreted, or neither read nor interpreted. The closing note informs us that the scribe teaches in his usual way (והסופר מלמד כדרכו, t. Meg. 3[4].38).⁸³ Whether or not this sentence allows us to extrapolate the existence of a comprehensive course in translation at the elementary school—which is plausible in view of contemporary practices in education⁸⁴—the remark indicates that the venue of translation influences its practice. Another example related to education is found in b. Meg. 22a, where R. Hanina states that a division of a verse into two halves was not permitted except for school children.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Qoh. R. 7:5; 9:17; for these texts, see below, p. 174.

⁸² See Ch. Two above, pp. 92–94.

⁸³ So S. Lieberman, *סדר מועד, תוספתא* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), p. 363 (identical to edn Zuckerman, p. 228).

⁸⁴ See P.S. Alexander, 'How Did the Rabbis Learn Hebrew?', in W. Horbury (ed.), *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999), pp. 71–89; P.S. Alexander, "'Homer the Prophet of All" and "Moses Our Teacher": Late Antique Exegesis of the Homeric Epics and of the Torah of Moses', in L.V. Rutgers et al. (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 127–42.

⁸⁵ A related incident is reported in y. Meg. 4:5, 75b.

An obvious impact of location on language selection is the distinction between a translation for scholarly or private purposes and public translation. Masoretic-type notes in many manuscripts warn that certain translations are not to be delivered in public: *לא מתרגם בציבורא*. The context would be the scriptural recitation that was accompanied by an oral-performative translation, rendered from memory but based on extant texts. These regulations are discussed in Chapter Five.

Along with location, wording and subject matter of a given biblical passage play a part in the evaluation of translatability. The Mishnaic discussion of whether translation is allowed or not (it is quite revealing, that texts are discussed from this point of view) hinges on what was deemed to be most important: the exact wording, its proper understanding, or its potential for setting the wrong example. In writing texts for *mezuzot* and *tefillin*, the exact Hebrew wording could not be sacrificed for clarity, because, for exegetical and magical presuppositions, translation would invalidate the text.⁸⁶ When reading the pericope of the accused woman, the theory goes that the text simply had to be translated for non-native speakers. A most interesting category to be considered is that of prayers and blessings. Such permission was not just related to text-immanent factors, however, no matter how much the Bavli argues this point. Established practice will have played a part; there is reason to assume that, had translation of these prayers not been usual at all, translation would not have been allowed (just as using translations would, eventually, be phased out).

The Bible translations occupy a border position between the two so desirable goals of preserving the exact wording while facilitating proper understanding of the Tora. Forsaking translations—assuming that local communities would have followed suit—would have been tantamount to forsaking understanding of what had surely become an obscure language. On the other hand, allowing translations intimates the risk of substituting them for the immutable, yet inexhaustive, Hebrew Tora. The eventual rabbinic solution is intrinsically beautiful and elegant, as the translations are relegated to the Oral Tora, which highlights the priority of the Hebrew Tora, without sacrificing its proper understanding. The translations were meant to be used in conjunction with the original text, never indepen-

⁸⁶ So also G. Veltri, *Eine Tora für den König Talmai: Untersuchungen zum Übersetzungsverständnis in der jüdisch-hellenistischen und rabbinischen Literatur* (TSAJ, 41; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), pp. 148–50.

dently; they were recited from memory, while the Hebrew was read from the text to ensure that no one would mistakenly believe the translation for the original.⁸⁷

The rabbis never attributed the elevated status of either the original text, or the Hebrew language, to the Bible translations. The very shape of the Tora, its order of letters, the bare and unpointed form of the text, assumed an overwhelming importance.⁸⁸ In translation, the very shape of the text cannot be preserved, which has interpretative ramifications. The immutable, physical form of the text was inextricably related to the production of interpretation, of halakha and ultimate authority. It functioned as an oracle: this text is *divine*. As a corollary, its Hebrew form restricted the wielding of interpretative power to those who were steeped in both language and tradition.

In Palestine, Aramaic translations may have found their way into the synagogue much later than in the Diaspora, possibly not before the second century CE.⁸⁹ Generalizations, admittedly, may be misleading, for reasons that will become clear shortly. But the assumption of a relatively late introduction and regularization of the use of translations is based on observations that strongly hint at the absence of bilingual recitation. All the first century sources on Palestine, including Philo, Josephus and the New Testament, refer to all elements within the service, including midrashic expositions, but remain silent about a translation—which does not imply that no translation was used, but that only a single text was recited, whether the Hebrew source text or a translation. Only literary sources dating from the second century CE onward relate translations to the synagogue; it is rabbinic narratives about Aquila, Onqelos and Jonathan that associate attempts at mastering and reshaping the Bible translations with the Tannaim who lived after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. The versions of Aquila, Symmachus, Onqelos and Jonathan all seem to have received their impetus in this important century of renewed self-identification by the religious rulers of a Temple-less Judaism.

Actual practice differed considerably from the ideal picture, as rabbinic literature itself suggests. The lack of institutional power and Roman

⁸⁷ More on this in Ch. 5, section 5.1.

⁸⁸ Cf. A.M. Goldberg, 'Formen und Funktionen von Schriftauslegung in der früh-rabbinischen Literatur', *Linguistica Biblica* Bonn 64 (1990), pp. 5–22.

⁸⁹ Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, pp. 24–41; cf. 180–88, 634–38 and 656.

recognition would not give the rabbis a self-evident edge on local practices,⁹⁰ as several references to actual practices as late as the fourth century CE illustrate.⁹¹ Shinan rightly observed that the 'sources, in fact, tell us much more about what the meturgeman was forbidden to do than what he actually did'.⁹² Local communities used to be autonomous, including the organization of the synagogue service.⁹³ We must therefore assume that a variety of practices existed. Some villages did not possess a copy of the Tora, as m. Meg. 1.1-2 suggests,⁹⁴ and we can only speculate about their religious customs. The costs of a written copy in Late Antiquity, which had to be written on parchment, would not have improved widespread distribution in the rural areas. And even when villages owned a copy of the Tora, their practices need not have been uniform. Not every village enjoyed the presence of someone who was gifted to deliver a translation into Aramaic, as the Talmudim suggest,⁹⁵ while translation appears to have remained an optional activity according to mainstream rabbinic ideology. At this point, however, rabbinic ideology may have differed from public perception.

3.5 Angels, Aramaic and the Amida

We can further chart a distinct dislike of Aramaic for liturgical purposes among Palestinian rabbis, in spite of the lively activity of poets and translators working in Aramaic. Rabbi attempted to forbid the use of a translation of the Shema (y. Sot. 7.1, 21b), which met with initial opposition but eventually became the default position. The reticence squarely agrees with the sentiment against the use of Aramaic in personal prayer, most plainly expressed in R. Yoḥanan's teaching that no one should entreat God with personal requests in the Aramaic language, 'for the ministering

⁹⁰M. Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132-212* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000).

⁹¹A.D. York, 'The Targum in the Synagogue and in the School', *JSJ* 10 (1979), pp. 74-86.

⁹²A. Shinan, 'Live Translation: On the Nature of the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch', *Prooftexts* 3 (1984), pp. 41-49 (42).

⁹³Goodman, *State and Society in Galilee*, *passim*.

⁹⁴Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity', p. 28.

⁹⁵See b. Meg. 23b; y. Meg. 4.3, 75a.

angels do not understand Aramaic'.⁹⁶ R. Yoḥanan's dissuasion indicates that (at least some) Palestinian rabbis frowned upon Aramaic prayers and favoured the use of Hebrew. This tradition has not come down to us in Palestinian sources but in Babylonian ones, an observation which demands explanation in the light of its literary antecedents and contextual themes.

The first question to be answered is that of the original context of this *locus classicus*: does the tradition belong in b. Sot. 33a or b. Shab. 12b, is it germane to both, or has it been placed in a new textual habitat in both sources? At issue in b. Shab. 12b is whether one may visit someone who is ill on a shabbat. The topic of the permissibility to use the Aramaic language in prayer is triggered *en passant* in the context of exceptions to several prohibitions, more specifically the question whether sages may or may not read by the light of a lamp. In this connection, Rabba bar bar Ḥanna relates that R. Eleazar would visit a sick person and wish him well, now in Hebrew, then in Aramaic. This recollection triggers the question how he could ever have used Aramaic (following ms Ox23):

והיכי עביד הכי והאמ' רב יהודה אמ' רב לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו בלשון ארמית
דאמ' ר' יוחנן כל השואל צרכיו בלשון ארמית אין מלאכי השרת נוקקין לו לפי שאין
מלאכי השרת מכירין בלשון ארמית

But how could he do this? Has not Rav Yehuda said, «Rav said»,⁹⁷ A man should never bid for his needs in Aramaic, since R. Yoḥanan said, Whoever bids for his needs in Aramaic, the ministering angels do not attend to him, for the ministering angels do not understand Aramaic.

The reference to Rav Yehuda and R. Yoḥanan is identical with b. Sot. 33a. In keeping with the different context of this discussion, visiting sick people, the continuation is not identical but still bears a resemblance to the parallel in Sota: שאתי חולה דשכינ' עמו 'It is different [for] a sick person, because the Shekhina is with him'. This resolution is bolstered by further claims of God attending the sick, citing Ps. 41.4. The assumption that God's presence removes the otherwise necessary involvement of angelic intermediaries, hence allowing for the use of Aramaic, is relevant to b. Sot. 33a.

⁹⁶b. Shab. 12b; b. Sot. 33a; Sek. T. Exod. 16. Cf. J. Yahalom, 'Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic...', *JJS* 57 (1996), pp. 33–44.

⁹⁷In Ox23, there is a plus at this point: אמ' רב 'Said Rav', supported by Eyn Yaaqov and Rif. Since Rav belonged to the generation preceding R. Yoḥanan, this presumably is a scribal error, triggered by the fact that Rav Yehuda was Rav's pupil.

The tradition in Sota is embedded in a discussion about the appropriate use of the holy tongue or 'any other language' for specific rituals (m. Sot. 7). Following the list of texts which, according to the Mishna, may be recited in any language, the *gemara* dwells on each item starting with the *sota*, moving on to the confession of the tithes, the recital of the Shema, and then the language selection for prayer of תפלה, the eighteen benedictions. This elicits the same tradition of Rav Yehuda, citing R. Yohanan, followed by a resolution, a challenge to the resolution, and further resolutions before moving on to the Grace after Meal. It should be noted that the exception of one language among many is unique in the reception of m. Sot. 7.1.

In both passages, the tradition appears to be drawn into the discussion to challenge the use of either Aramaic as the only alternative to Hebrew (b. Shab. 12b) or Aramaic among all the languages of the world (b. Sot. 33a). Both passages relate to prayer. R. Yohanan's teaching therefore appears to be independent of both current discussions. The latter passage in full reads as follows:

תפלה⁹⁸ רחמי היא כל היכי דבעי מצלי ותפלה בכל לשון⁹⁹ והאמר רב יהודה לעולם אל ישאל אדם צרכיו בלשון ארמית¹⁰⁰ דאמר רבי יוחנן כל השואל צרכיו בלשון ארמי אין מלאכי השרת נזקקין לו לפי שאין מלאכי השרת מכירין בלשון ארמי לא קשיא הא ביחיד הא בצבור ואין מלאכי השרת מכירין בלשון ארמי והתניא יוחנן כהן גדול שמע¹⁰¹ ב"ק¹⁰² מבית קדש הקדשים שהוא אומר נצחו טליא דאזלו לאגחא קרבא לאנטוכיא¹⁰³ ושוב מעשה בשמעון הצדיק ששמע בת קול מבית קדש הקדשים שהוא אומר בטילת עבדתא דאמר שנאה לאייתאה על היכלא ונהרג גסקלגס ובטלו גזירותיו וכתבו¹⁰⁴ אותה שעה וכיוונו ובלשון ארמי היה אומר אי בעית אימא בת קול שאני דלאשמועי עבידא ואי בעית אימא גבריאלי הוה דאמר מר בא גבריאלי ולימדו שבעים לשון Prayer. This is [to request God's] mercy. One may pray in whatever [language] one wishes.

May prayer [be recited] in any language? Yet Rav Yehuda said, A man should

⁹⁸The keyword from the Mishna, תפלה, is not attested in Mun95. This minus is not pointed out in A. Liss (ed.), *מסכת שוטה* (Jerusalem: The Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1979), II, p. פח. Mon88 reads ותפלה.

⁹⁹Vat110 has the plus נאמרה after לשון.

¹⁰⁰In Vat110, ארמית is a minus, corrected in the margin as ארמי. This is a scribal error, because the reference is necessary in this context.

¹⁰¹שמע is a minus in Vat110.

¹⁰²קול is a minus in Mun95.

¹⁰³באנטוכיא is the better reading in Vat110 and Mun95, supported by t. Sot. 13.5.

¹⁰⁴Vat110, Mun95 and Mon88 invert the order of וכתבו and וכיוונו. וכתבו is a minus in Mun95.

never bid for his needs in Aramaic, because R. Yoḥanan said, Whoever bids for his needs in Aramaic, the ministering angels do not attend to him, for the ministering angels do not understand Aramaic.

No problem, here [R. Yoḥanan refers] to an individual and there [praying in any language refers] to a community.

Do the ministering angels not understand Aramaic?

Has it not been taught, Yoḥanan the High Priest heard a whisper from the Holy of Holies, which said: 'The young men who went to wage war against Antiochia achieved victory'!

And once again, the case of Simeon the Righteous, when he heard a whisper from the Holy of Holies, which said: 'Annulled is the cult which the enemy threatened to introduce into the Temple!' Indeed, Gasqalgas was killed and they abolished his decrees. They recorded the time [of the whisper] and it tallied [with the actual event].

And it spoke in Aramaic!

If you prefer, say that the whisper is different [from angels] because it is to announce a fact. Or if you prefer, say it was Gabriel, as a master said, Gabriel came and taught seventy languages.

That prayer is supplication leads to the conclusion that any language be allowed,¹⁰⁵ in keeping with the Mishna. The surprise comes in the form of the exclusion of Aramaic from all other languages because angels, R. Yoḥanan said, do not understand Aramaic—and therefore cannot convey the prayer to God.¹⁰⁶ Why angels would be capable of handling prayer in any language but Aramaic remains obscure. It has been suggested that this tradition had a strong impact on language selection in the medieval period. Joshua Trachtenberg claimed that in medieval times 'the angels as linguists remained in bad repute',¹⁰⁷ so that the core of any charm directed at the angels was formulated in Hebrew. More recently, Yehuda Liebes argued that the early mystics may have adopted Aramaic as their language of choice for the very reason that angels were deemed not to recognize the language, while the Shekhina does.¹⁰⁸ Aramaic, on that assumption, is best suited

¹⁰⁵For prayer as a request for mercy, see b. Ber. 20b; 26b.

¹⁰⁶See A. Lehnardt, '"Therefore They Ordained to Say it in Aramaic": Some Remarks on Language and Style of the Kaddish', in J. Targarona Borrás and A. Sáenz-Badillos (eds.), *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress Toledo, July 1998*, 1, *Biblical, Rabbinical, and Medieval Studies* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 303–10.

¹⁰⁷J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Atheneneum, 1970), pp. 74–75.

¹⁰⁸Y. Liebes, 'Hebrew and Aramaic as Languages of the Zohar', *ArSt* 4 (2006), pp. 35–52.

for an intimate relationship with God. Neither opinion accounts for the literary history of the tradition and its reception in the first millennium CE. A proper understanding of the tradition requires an analysis of its literary setting and antecedents.

If the Zohar truly takes R. Yoḥanan's statement at face value, we should not follow suit. The first flourishing of Jewish magical literature bears out that both demons and 'good' angels know their Aramaic full well. Demons and angels are addressed in Aramaic,¹⁰⁹ just as many liturgical prayers are formulated in Aramaic, as the Jews of Kerouwan, Tunisia, put to Rav Sherira and Hai Gaon at about 1,000 CE:¹¹⁰ 'But behold, all the supplications and prayers that came to our fathers of blessed memory from the Holy Academy, all of them are in the Aramaic language!'¹¹¹ These two Geonim respond that 'there are also instances in the *gemara* of rabbis speaking with angels and the angels with them in the Aramaic language'.¹¹² In fact, they say, 'But whatever we have seen or heard, never have we seen or heard that the sages refrained from bidding for their needs in the Aramaic language'.¹¹³ The Tosafot on their part wonder how angels can fail to understand Aramaic if they are supposed to know the thoughts in every person's heart (Tos. b. Shab. 12b). We might speculate that angels restricted themselves to the holy tongue, which they shared with human beings;¹¹⁴ such was the emerging notion of a holy tongue. But in fact our sources never claim that angels only ever understand Hebrew.

The *sugya* transmits several Palestinian traditions, but rearranged in a new textual embedding. Rav Yehuda repeats a teaching of the Palestinian Amora R. Yoḥanan, which at face value refutes the ruling that any language be allowed for prayer. An anonymous voice resolves the tension by differentiating between private and communal prayer: the angels attend to private prayers, so these cannot be voiced in Aramaic, but communal

¹⁰⁹E.g., Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte*, II, p. 153 ll. 15-16; p. 185 ll. 24-26.

¹¹⁰A. Harkavy, *Studien und Mitteilungen aus der Kaiserlichen Öffentlichen Bibliothek zu St. Petersburg*, IV, *Response der Geonim (zumeist aus dem x-xl. Jahrhundert)* (Berlin: Meqizei Nirdamim, 1887), § 373.

¹¹¹והא כולהו רחמי ובעיי דאתו לאבותינו זכ' לב' ממתיתבתא קדישתא כולהו בלשון ארמית הן.

¹¹²ואיכא בגמרא נמי מילי דהוה משתאעו רבנן עם מלאכים ומשתאעו עמהון בלשון ארמי.

¹¹³אילא מיהו במאי דחאזי לנא ובמאי דשמיע לנא לא חזינא ולא שמענא מעולם דמימנעין רבנן מלמשאל צורכיהן בלשון ארמי.

¹¹⁴See above, p. 14.

prayers are accepted directly by God. This resolution still transforms the Mishna's ruling that prayer be allowed in any language by restricting Aramaic to set communal prayers. What remains unclear is whether only Aramaic is ruled out, or whether the exclusion of Aramaic invalidates the mishnaic leniency altogether.

The discussion then turns to a counter-argument that recycles another Palestinian tradition on the use of Aramaic in several occurrences of the heavenly whisper, *bat qol*, which can also be found in the Tosefta and Yerushalmi (and even in Josephus' *Antiquities*).¹¹⁵ Both Yohanan the High Priest and Shimon the Righteous hear a *bat qol* emerging from the Holy of Holies with a political announcement in each case: the defeat of Antiochia and Caligula, that occurs at the very moment of speaking.¹¹⁶ These two case reports are concluded by the observation that the heavenly whisper spoke in Aramaic. For the argument to work, the language of the *bat qol* must be identified with the angelic language—whether or not the heavenly whisper is perceived as one communicated by angels. In the underlying Palestinian traditions, the *bat qol* consistently speaks in Aramaic.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Sifre Deut. 343 ascribes Aramaic to God's angelic entourage. And the Geonim Sherira and Hai Gaon observe that the penitential poems and prayers in Aramaic were still addressed to the ministering angels in spite of all the caveats above.

The sugya ends with two anonymous solutions for the problem that angels would seem to understand Aramaic after all. These two fixes are presented as equally possible since they are introduced by the phrase *אני אימא בעית* 'If you prefer, say'.¹¹⁸ The first suggests that a *bat qol* differs from an angel, because a whisper announces a fact and has to convey its message in the vernacular of its audience in order to be understood. Angels, by contrast, do not fulfil this function. The second answer affirms

¹¹⁵t. Sot. 13.4-6; y. Sot. 9.13-14(12), 24b; Ev. Rab. 8; Cant. R. 8.13; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.3 (282-83).

¹¹⁶In the Bavli, the name of Gaius Caligula is corrupted into Gasqalas (which also occurs in the MSS of the Tosefta).

¹¹⁷See n. 115 above; Hekhalot §123 (P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* [TSAJ, 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981]); and see further P. Kuhn, *Offenbarungsstimmen im Antiken Judentum: Untersuchungen zur Bat Qol und verwandten Phänomenen* (TSAJ, 20; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989); P. Kuhn, *Bat Qol: Die Offenbarungsstimme in der rabbinischen Literatur* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1989).

¹¹⁸Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, p. 239.

the identification of the *bat qol* with an angel, but restrictively so, namely with Gabriel alone, as Gabriel has been credited with teaching the seventy languages of the world to Joseph in *b. Sot.* 36b. This latter solution thus leaves the general angelic ignorance of Aramaic intact. The possibility that this anonymous resolution is prompted by the textual propinquity of *Sot.* 36b suggests that the topic of angelic understanding of Aramaic attracted further attention at a relatively late and literary stage of the *Bavli*'s redaction. From the objection 'Do the ministering angels not understand Aramaic?' until the anonymous resolutions at its end, this unit rereads Palestinian traditions of Aramaic 'whispers' to further reflect on the exclusion of Aramaic.

In the *Tosefta* and the *Yerushalmi*, the Aramaic language of these whispers had already been singled out. There, however, the *bat qol* cases do not occur in the context of language selection for prayer but in that of the disappearing faculty of prophecy. To begin with the *Tosefta* (*t. Sot.* 13.3): 'When the latter prophets died—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—the Holy Spirit came to an end in Israel, but even so, they made them hear [heavenly messages] through a *bat qol*'.¹¹⁹ What follows is a precedent (*מעשה*) about a whisper announcing to a gathering of sages in Jericho that Hillel is worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit, but his generation is not. A second heavenly announcement to a gathering of sages in Yavne concerns Little Shmuel, who also merits the Holy Spirit in contrast to his generation. Yet in his case an important anecdote is tagged onto the story (*t. Sot.* 13.4):

אף הוא אומ' בשעת מיתתו שמעון ושמעאל לחרבא וחבריהי לקטלא ושאר עמא לבייא
ועקן סגיאין יהיון אחרי דנא ובלשון ארמית אמרן

Moreover, at the time of his death he said,

Shimon and Ishmael are for the sword, his friends for slaughter, and the rest of the people are up for spoils, and after this there will be many troubles.

And he said these [words] in Aramaic.

The prediction of the impending death of two major sages refers to the consequences of the Bar Kokhba revolt, which were held to mark the painful death of Shimon and Ishmael.¹²⁰ Apparently Little Shmuel still has the gift of prophecy. But why does the anecdote underline the cir-

¹¹⁹ משמתו חגי זכריה ומלאכי נביאים האחרונים פסקה רוח הקודש מישראל' ואף על פי כן היו¹¹⁹
משמיעין להן בבת קול.

¹²⁰ Cf. *Mek.* 18 נויקין (p. 313); Y.Y. Tepler, *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World* (TSAJ, 120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 94.

cumstance that he spoke Aramaic? Since his words are quoted in Aramaic, the observation seems superfluous. His case is shortly followed by two instances of a whisper, which the Bavli records, yet without the term *bat qol*: both Yohanan the High Priest and Shimon the Righteous שמע 'heard'. What they overhear is written in Aramaic, which is again singled out for attention: ובלשון ארמי שמעו 'And they heard them in the Aramaic language'. The Tosefta does not elaborate this point any further, which leaves the impression that this assembled series of whispers do not tell the whole story, for they do not fully articulate the importance of the Aramaic language in which the last whispers were couched.¹²¹ The motif of something coming to an end tallies with the general tenor of m. Sot. 9.9-15, but the Mishna does not include the end of prophecy, nor does it have any reference to language in this connection.

The Yerushalmi provides the same context as the Tosefta, but has a different order: it starts with the whisper (בת קול) overheard by Shimon the Righteous¹²² and Yohanan the High Priest, and then narrates the stories about Hillel and Little Shmuel. Curiously, the Yerushalmi concludes the narrative of Little Shmuel with the enigmatic remark: ובלשון ארמית אמר: ולא ידעי מה אמר, 'And he spoke these [words] in Aramaic but they did not understand what he said'. Surely, their lack of understanding cannot have been related to the language as such, not just for historical reasons, but primarily because all other instances of Aramaic whispers are clearly understood: announcements of events are even checked with historical data and found to be in agreement.¹²³ What they do not grasp is the impending disaster of the revolt and its aftermath to which his prophecy refers, despite the use of their own vernacular. Their lack of understanding is an indictment of the generation that was not worthy of the Holy Spirit.

The Tosefta and the Yerushalmi observe the apparently singular use of Aramaic in overheard heavenly whispers, yet neither elaborates on what made this so peculiar a fact. On the strength of the present textual setting of the observation it appears that the Aramaic language signals these heavenly

¹²¹The first two occurrences of the whisper, about Hillel and Little Shmuel, are related in Hebrew. Whether they were originally formulated in Hebrew, however, must remain open. They could have been recast in Hebrew, because their Aramaic origin was not important for the narrative, in contrast to the latter three cases.

¹²²Followed by an intermezzo to explain בת קול הברה as 'echo'. A later hand marked the intermezzo for deletion in ms Scalz.

¹²³Cf. Lieberman, תוספתא כפשוטה, VIII, p. 738.

whispers as lesser revelations, which replace prophecy that has come to an end because the current generations are no longer sufficiently virtuous to deserve such divine grace. The theme of degeneration continues when the Yerushalmi slurs the generation that fails to understand Little Shmuel's words. The surprise in the Tosefta and Yerushalmi about the selection of Aramaic for these heavenly announcements relates to the one language in which these messages were not conveyed, namely the holy tongue.

The prominence of Aramaic in these narratives provided the Bavli with the opportunity to bring them into play with the startling claim of R. Yoḥanan that angels do not understand Aramaic. As the editors picked up on the Palestinian surprise about the use of Aramaic for heavenly communications, they did not relate the Aramaic *bat qol* to the end of prophecy and accordingly the Bavli neither repeats Little Shmuel's prophecy nor indicts his generation. Rather, in their current use as an objection to R. Yoḥanan these stories would countenance the use of Aramaic for prayer because even heavenly whispers were formulated in that language. This selective re-use of the tradition deflects the notion of linguistically limited angels, which interestingly occurs only in the Bavli and not in any (early) Palestinian source, despite the attribution to a Palestinian *amora*. Still, this idea is unlikely to represent Babylonian fiction because the sentiment suits the Palestinian context with its insistence on Hebrew.

The use of Aramaic by angels and angelic agents plainly touches a rabbinic nerve. The Palestinian sources cannot readily explain this other than to emphasize the downward spiral in piety which brought about the use of a lesser tongue. By a twist of fate the Babylonian peers felt less surprise about the heavenly use of Aramaic than about the Palestinian urge to fight the use of Aramaic in private prayers. In spite of the notion that angels do not understand Aramaic, the Bavli concludes that the Amida may well be translated into Aramaic.¹²⁴ Similarly, Rabbi's decrimal of Aramaic is

¹²⁴ Evidence for early translations is not available. The Aramaic translation of the Amida published by M. Gaster ('Ein Targum der Amidah', MGWJ 39.2 (1894), pp. 79–90) is dated to the 16th–19th c. CE; see A. Samely, 'Writing in an (Almost) Classical Vein: The Art of Targum in an Aramaic Paraphrase of the Amidah', in P.S. Alexander and A. Samely (eds.), *Artefact and Text: The Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts. Proceedings of a Conference held in the University of Manchester 28–30 April 1992* (=BJRL 75 [1993]; Manchester: John Rylands University Library, 1994), pp. 175–264. Possible Greek versions may have existed at an earlier stage; see P.W. van der Horst, 'Neglected Greek Evidence for Early Jewish Liturgical Prayer', JSJ 29 (1998), pp. 278–96.

ironically retorted by Rav Yoseph.¹²⁵ However complacent the Bavli may have been, it addresses another pitfall and selects these traditions for that purpose: the custom of praying to angels. R. Yoḥanan was at least as concerned about that as about praying in the Aramaic language *per se*. The attempt to ban prayers in Aramaic, which is evidenced by the use of some Hebrew responses in the Palestinian Targums,¹²⁶ would, at least in theory, topple private addresses to the angels. None of the statutory prayers from the Talmudic prayers address the angels, as Heineman observed, and most of the Aramaic prayers belong to a separate category.¹²⁷ The practice of praying to angels carried dangers of idolatry and heresy.

So why did the angels not understand the one language everyone else understood? R. Yoḥanan's statement should be seen as part of an ongoing battle against the use of Aramaic for religious purposes, as prescriptive and not descriptive; in short, that the claim angels do not understand Aramaic is pious fraud and that in fact they used to have a penchant for Aramaic, as do the forces of evil in later qabbalistic literature. Angels always understood Aramaic.

While prescribed forms of prayer in Hebrew were preferred as opposed to informal prayers in Aramaic, it should be emphasized that Aramaic prayers still played a prominent part in the service—in particular in relation to the reading and exposition of Tora, or within the framework of the service as introductions and conclusions of its main components.¹²⁸ The bilingual Qaddish is one prominent example, and famously difficult at that. While the origins of this prayer are beyond the earliest available evidence, the bilingual character of the prayer is rightly asserted as constitutive for its reception history. However, the introduction of Hebrew elements into the Qaddish (rather than the opposite, old hypothesis of Aramaic finding its way into this prayer) has perhaps not been sufficiently considered. In general, Palestinian rabbis would have preferred Hebrew for prayers, in particular those prayers which they approved of, and they tried to steer their communities in that direction. Even if these attempts do not seem to have been successful in many cases, the use of Aramaic would

¹²⁵ See p. 92 above.

¹²⁶ Yahalom, 'Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic', p. 33.

¹²⁷ J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 249, 265–66.

¹²⁸ Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 265–66.

remain challenged. In medieval times the notion occurs that Aramaic had been introduced for the unlearned; and even though this idea does not seem to occur in Tannaitic and Amoraic times,¹²⁹ it continues a rabbinic tradition lacking enthusiasm for the use of Aramaic in the liturgy while favouring the use of Hebrew for the higher registers of the rabbinic tradition. As for Rashi, errors in the Aramaic translation of the Haftarah did not require correction; after all, 'the Targum is only for women and *ammei haaretz* who do not understand the Holy Tongue' (Meg. 21b). The Tosafot held the opinion that the Qaddish was ordained in Aramaic because the *ammei haaretz* did not understand the Holy Tongue.¹³⁰ Such a sentiment, of course partly rooted in the demise of Aramaic as a Jewish and international *lingua franca*, also builds on the Amoraic precedent. And yet, these negative reflections on the use of Aramaic are precariously at odds with the increasing importance of Aramaic for the mystical tradition.

A defence of Aramaic is staged by R. Shmuel b. Naḥman in the name of no one else but our very R. Yoḥanan: 'The Aramaic language should not be cheap in your eyes, since that language is found in the Tora, Prophets and Writings'.¹³¹ But this defence comes in the wake of propaganda on the part of Hebrew and precedes the tradition about the four languages that are fit for use—Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Hebrew—only to conclude with the following remark: 'They selected for Israel the Ashurit [script] and the holy tongue, leaving the Hebrew characters and the Aramaic language for the common people'.¹³² The Palestinian sages selected Hebrew for the purpose of their own discourse, rather than Aramaic; again, a functional differentiation. The very defence of Aramaic, which is uncalled for, shows that there was a tendency in this direction, which is all too obvious from the equation between Aramaic, women, and *ammei haaretz* by Rashi and other medieval authors. All this attention to non-Hebrew languages reveals a sensitivity that is heightened when communication with God and the divine realm comes into focus. Aramaic was not held in general disdain, but evaluated according to the scope of its subject matter.

¹²⁹ Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', p. 258 n. 10; Lehnardt, "'Therefore They Ordained to Say it in Aramaic'", pp. 303–10.

¹³⁰ Tos. b. Ber. 3a (on which see Lehnardt, *Qaddish*, pp. 265–66); Sof. 18.4.

¹³¹ y. Sot. 7.2, 21c. See p. 64 above.

¹³² Full citation below, p. 271.

3.6 Language selection matters

Having observed rabbinic appreciation of multiple languages, albeit subsumed under Hebrew as the mother of all languages, and the increasing emphasis on the holy tongue in the late Tannaitic and Amoraic periods, the reality of a multilingual society provides an important contextualization of the rabbinic reflections on languages.

The overwhelming evidence for a multilingual society in Roman Palestine, with multiple vernaculars intersecting with languages of prestige, whether of Hellenistic or of Jewish bent, and to a lesser extent in the Diaspora, sparks off many questions. The extent to which multiple languages and their literatures could be grasped and appropriated is important for our assessment of the rise to power of the rabbinic movement, its influence and success. As the common obeisance to the Tora did not automatically translate into adoption of the rabbinic way of life, which the divided society pre-70 CE amply demonstrates, it is interesting to observe the role of language in the attempt to extend rabbinic influence to the populations of Roman Palestine and the rather heterogeneous Diaspora. The attempt to impose rabbinic standards upon the population is perhaps nowhere as evident as in the allegation that angels do not understand Aramaic, although the sources reveal that they do and always did.

Code-switching in rabbinic sources evidences the concurrent use of Hebrew and Aramaic in the early centuries CE, possibly even resulting in an intertwined language. Language selection and code-switching appear to assume a more literary and perhaps more functional use in the following centuries, although far more research is needed in this respect. It is clear, however, that the attested code-switching between dialects and languages is not all of one piece, suggesting a functional difference in one place while giving the impression of purely random alternation elsewhere.

Beneath the linguistic surface of our sources may lie a world which we do not know enough about, because our sources seem to conceal the extent of switching which interpreters and rhetorics practised. Such code-switching may have been rampant among the rabbis and the interpreters, and indeed may have been part of standard rhetorical training, as I will argue in the following chapter, but the level at which most people would have switched between languages is likely to have been much more restricted. As the command of languages varied, the rabbis varied their

demands of language selection. Context was important. Law suits required the defendant to understand the accusation and procedure, certain rituals entailed the use of the language of Holiness, epitaphs were valued in the language of the 'high culture'.

That the evidence used to extrapolate a lingual map of Judaism in Late Antiquity is far from straightforward has been emphasized throughout the present chapter. Far too often epigraphic evidence is considered a mirror of linguistic abilities, but the discrepancy between the authors of our literary sources and the majority of the population is missed when the sources are taken to speak for themselves—which they do not.

Part II

The locus of translation

The terminology of translation

Bilingualism is an ancient phenomenon; translation is its corollary. The word תרגום 'translation' derives from Akkadian *targummanu(m)* 'interpreter, translator', which first occurs by the beginning of the second millennium BCE. At that time Mesopotamia was a bilingual culture in which Sumerian stood out as the language of culture and liturgy, and Akkadian as the common vernacular.¹ Although most scholars still hold that *targummanu(m)* is related to the root *ragāmu* 'to call (out)',² this connection—and the supposedly inherited meaning of 'speaking out aloud' of the root תרגם³—is almost certainly wrong. The noun-formation of *targummanu(m)* is neither Akkadian nor Semitic, but points to a Luwian loanword in Akkadian.⁴ Via Aramaic, *targummanu(m)* was adopted in Hebrew and Arabic, and later in many Indo-European languages.⁵

¹W.W. Hallo, 'Bilingualism and the Beginnings of Translation', in M.V. Fox et al., *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 345–57.

²I.J. Gelb, 'The Word for Dragoman in the Ancient Near East', *Glossa* 2 (1968), pp. 92–103 (101–102); W.G. Lambert, 'A Vocabulary of an Unknown Language', *MARI* 5 (1987), pp. 409–13 (410–11).

³Z. Safrai, 'The Targums as Part of Rabbinic Literature', in Safrai et al. (eds.), *The Literature of the Sages*, II, pp. 243–78 (244). The semantic overlap between *targummanu(m)* and *ragāmu* is not so impressive as is sometimes suggested; see CAD 18, pp. 229–30 and CAD 14, pp. 62–67.

⁴The ending *-annu(m)* only occurs in non-Semitic loanwords in Akkadian, as Von Soden, Rabin and Starke pointed out; F. Starke, 'Zur Herkunft von akkad. *ta/urgumannu(m)* "Dolmetscher"', *WO* 24 (1993), pp. 20–38; C. Rabin, 'Hittite Words in Hebrew', *Orientalia* 32 (1963), pp. 113–39 (134–36); W. von Soden, *Aus Sprache, Geschichte und Religion Babyloniens: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (eds. L. Cagni and H.-P. Müller; Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989), pp. 351–57. Starke argues that the word is an original Luwian formation.

⁵For the probable background in Akkadian, see S. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Assyriological Studies, 19; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), p. 107; For French, Italian, Spanish and Arabic, see A. Díez Macho, *El Targum: Introducción a los traducciones aramaicas de la Biblia* (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1972), p. 5. In German, the words *Dragoman* and *Dolmetscher* are attested;

Regardless of the putative etymology of the root תרגם, its meaning can only be established in an analysis of the way it is used in rabbinic literature. The root exists in the form of three nouns and one verb: מתורגמן and תורגמן 'interpreter' or 'spokesman', תרגום 'translation', and the verb תרגם 'translate, interpret, proclaim'. Clear as the common denominator of the root may be, we cannot take the stable meaning of the derived lexemes for granted. Quotations from various documents, periods and provenances cannot be anthologized as if they represent a seamless unity. In this chapter I will briefly review the various uses of these lexemes in view of semantic, diachronic and geographic distinctions.

4.1 תרגום 'translation, declamation'

The noun תרגום has the following meanings in rabbinic literature: 'translation'; hyponym: 'Aramaic Bible translation'; hypernym of the latter: 'Aramaic'; 'halakhic interpretative statement'; 'declamation'.

Initially, תרגום denoted a 'translation' into any language. In this sense the word occurs in the Mishna, Tosefta and Yerushalmi. Usually, the language is not specified, but one case in the Yerushalmi bases the legitimacy of translation on the geographic distribution of Yaphet's children (see Chapter One above), which suggests that the point of reference was Greek. On another occasion Biblical Aramaic is considered a 'translation' in the Yerushalmi. Thus the noun תרגום does not connote any particular language in these sources.⁶

in Dutch, the old noun *dragoman* (sometimes shortened as *drogman*), derived from the Italian *drogomanno*. Exchanging the l/r sounds the current form is *tolk*; according to the *Groot Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* the form is related to Middle Dutch *tolic*, *Mittelniederdeutsch tolk* or *Mittelhochdeutsch tolke*, taken over from Old Russian. In the sense of 'render, play, interpret' the same element occurs in the verb *vertolken*.

⁶Any language: m. Meg. 2.1; t. Shab. 13.2; y. Shab. 16.1, 15b–c (2x); y. Sot. 2.2, 18a. Unspecified: t. Shab. 13.2 (2x); y. Meg. 2.1, 73a; y. Meg. 4.1, 74d (although the context gives an example which is about Aramaic, the original ruling is not necessarily limited to Aramaic); y. Ned. 4.3, 38c (2x); Lam. R. 2.10 (probably Aramaic). Greek or Greek and Aramaic: y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b (see pp. 296–97 below). Biblical Aramaic: m. Yad. 4.5 (3x); t. San. 4.7 (see below, pp. 288–90); y. San. 10.1, 27d. Nabataean Aramaic: Gen. R. 79.7. Note that in the instances for which we can identify the language, it does not automatically follow that this language was connoted by the noun rather than the context!

The noun denotes a translation with or without a written medium. Even if the translation had been memorized from a written source, the delivery would have been without a written medium according to rabbinic law. That an oral rendition was sometimes performed from a written translation emerges from *y. Meg.* 4.1, 74d, where R. Shmuel b. R. Yishāq reproaches a scribe who does just that. But the prescriptive texts that touch on the *targum* confirm the norm and refer to its oral-performative nature in a way that denies its written status. Subtly, this point is made in *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a:

הקורא את המגילה למפרע לא יצא דכתיב ככתבם קראה על פה לא יצא דכת' ככתבם
קראה תרגום לא יצא דכת' ככתבם בכל לשון לא יצא דכת' ככתבם וכלשונם
'Who reads the Scroll backwards has not fulfilled his obligation' (*m. Meg.* 2.1),
as it is written, 'in their script' (*Est.* 9.27).
'Who read it by heart' (*m. Meg.* 2.1) has not fulfilled his obligation, as it is
written, 'in their script' (*Est.* 9.27).
'Who read it in *targum*' (*m. Meg.* 2.1) has not fulfilled his obligation, as it is
written, 'in their script' (*Est.* 8.9/9.27).⁷
'in any language has not fulfilled his obligation' (*m. Meg.* 2.1), as it is written,
'in their script and in their language' (*Est.* 8.9).

Although the distinction between *targum* and 'in any language' might suggest that *targum* stands for 'Aramaic Bible translation', the proof-text suggests otherwise. Had the language been the target here, the proof-text should have been *ככתבם וכלשונם* (*Est.* 8.9) 'in their script and in their language', as indeed the last sentence has it. Since the proof-text is *ככתבם* 'in their script', the contrast is about a written versus an oral rendition in which *targum* refers to the oral-performative translation, barring the use of a written text, whereas the command to read the scroll of Esther *ככתבם* stipulates the use of a written text—on which counting reading the scroll in *targum* fails. In the absence of a written text, *targum* is equivocal to *קראה על פה*, as *b. Meg.* 18a points out. Thus the *Yerushalmi* adds precision to the discussion by extracting two elements from the expression *תרגום בכל לשון*: Both the oral nature of translation and the use of any language other than Hebrew contravene the prescribed procedure.

Perhaps this emphasis on the oral-performative aspect of *targum* explains why there is no reference to Aquila's translation as a *תרגום*;

⁷The word *ככתבם* occurs in both texts, but the first two elements of the *mishna* apply to the prescribed procedure (hence *Est.* 9.27).

references to his Bible version use the verb in the past tense. His translation was certainly deemed valid; in a pun on his name, R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua praised (וקילסו) Aquila (עקילס) for his translation, just as commendable interpretations are praised elsewhere in the Yerushalmi.⁸ But the rabbis mainly used his translation to comment on the meaning of specific Hebrew words, not to provide a running translation, and if such use was made of his work in Roman Palestine, as seems likely, no literary evidence has come down to us.

All instances of תרגום apply to a Bible translation or a translation within the Bible (Biblical Aramaic), although the noun probably could point to a translation of any text into any language. Instances of other translations may not have been recorded simply because there was no special interest in them. In Babylonia, the noun came to be understood as a specific term for an Aramaic version of the Bible, which represents a hyponym on two counts: the source text (Bible) and the language (Aramaic). The limitation of *targum* to 'Aramaic translation' underwent a reverse development when *targum* in m. Yad. 4.5—where it probably still denotes an Aramaic translation—was read as the hypernym 'Aramaic language' in b. Meg. 8b–9b, 18a and later documents. I will discuss these specific developments below, in Chapter Seven.⁹

A problematic meaning of תרגום is 'interpretation'. In this sense the noun only occurs in the Bavli where it denotes a rabbi's interpretative statement or an anonymous interpretation concerning a halakhic issue. Transparent as the semantics are, the morphology is highly suspect. In almost every instance the word functions as a verb, an observation further strengthened by variant readings which substitute the noun with a verb. Consider the following example (b. Hul. 36b):

Mun95, Vat121	וכי תימ' תרגומא אדם והא משקי קא(מ)'
Vat122	וכי תימ' תירגמא אדם והא משקי קא'
Ham169	וכ' תימ' אוקמה אדם והא משקה קאמ'
Son1489	וכי תימ' תרגמה אדם והא משקי קאמ'
Vilna	וכי תימא תרגמא אדם והא משקי קאמר
If you say, Interpret [this statement as referring] to blood only, behold! He said liquids.	

⁸ So J. Labendz, 'Aquila's Bible Translation in Late Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Perspectives', HTR 102 (2009), pp. 353–88 (362).

⁹ See pp. 288–90 below.

The verb **תרגמא** functions as a synonym of **אוקמה** in this instance, with **תרגומא** as an alternative. Accordingly, I will consider these instances among those of the verb.¹⁰

An unique instance of the noun **תירגמא** occurs in TgPs 7.1, translating **אס שגיון לדוד** 'A declamation/rendition of David's thanksgiving'.¹¹ Because there is little context and no parallel usage, **תירגמא** cannot safely be related to an interpretation of **אס שגיון** as **שאג** 'to roar',¹² which is usually rendered with **נהם** 'to roar' or **כלי** 'to proclaim', never with a derivate of **תרגם**. The element of a song inherent in **אס שגיון** may have been replicated by 'thanksgiving', as in the interpretation 'psalm' of the LXX.

4.2 תרגם 'to translate; interpret; declaim'

The verb is used with the following range of meanings: 'to translate' (oral-performative); 'to interpret, resolve' (hermeneutically); 'to state' (ha-

¹⁰ See also Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, II, pp. 242–45. In the following instances the Vilna edn has a noun; concerning **mishnayyot**, see b. Eruv. 30b (Mun95 **תרגימא**, Ox23 **תרגומא**); b. Pes. 42b (Mun6, Mun95, Rab1608, Rab1623, Ox23, Val9, Vati09, Vati25 and Vati34 all read **תרגימו**, ColX **תרגומו**); b. San. 25a (Flor, Herz1, Reuz, and Mun95 all read **תרגימו**); San. 42a (Reuz, Mun95 **תרגמה**, Flor **תורגמה**, Herz1 **תרגמוהא**); San. 43a (Reuz, Mun95 **תרגמה**, Flor **תורגמה**).

Concerning **baraitot**, see b. Bes. 27b (Mun95, Vati09 and Vati34 support **תרגמה**, while Lon400 reads **תורגמה**); b. Pes. 39b (Ox23, **תרגמה**; Vati34: **תרגומא**); Pes. 40a (Ox23, Vati34: **תרגומא**; Vati09: **תירגומא**); Yom. 19b (Lon400, Spet and Ox23 **תרגומא**); Yom. 37a (all MSS except Mun95 a verb: Lon400, Mun6, Rab1623, Rab218, Ox23 and Spet **תרגמה**); Yom. 37b (all MSS except Ox23 a verb: Lon400 **תרגמא**; Mun6, Mun95, Rab1623, Rab218 and Spet **תרגמה**); Eruv. 76b (2x; Mun95 and Ox23 first **תרגמה**, then **תרגומא**; Vati09 lacks the second instance); Zev. 25b (Mun95 and Vati18 **תרגמה**); Men. 108b (2x; AIU147 and Vati20 **תרגמה** twice); Bek. 10b (Lon402 **תרגמה**; Vati20 **תורגמא**).

Concerning Amoraic statements, see b. Eruv. 45a (Mun95: **ותרגמי**); b. Qid. 26b (Ox248 **תרגמא**, Vati11 **תורגמא**, Guad **תרגמה**); b. B. Mes. 29b (EscG13 and Hami65 **תרגמה**, Flor **תורגמה**); b. B. Bat. 145a (Flor **תורגמה**, while the phrase is not attested in EscG13 and Vati15); b. Men. 37b and 38a (Mun95, Vati18 and Vati20 **תרגמה**).

¹¹ The manuscripts vary between **תירגמא**, **תורגמא**, **תירגמה** and **תורגמנא**; see E. White, *A Critical Edition of the Targum of Psalms: A Computer Generated Text of Books I and II* (unpublished PhD thesis; Montreal: McGill University, 1988), p. 21.

¹² Contrast A. Houtman and H. Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions: The Use of Variant Readings for the Study in Origin and History of Targum Jonathan* (SAIS, 9; Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 15–16. See further D.M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004), p. 35, who takes **דאודיתא** as 'a loud song of thanksgiving'. Cf. n. 141 above.

lakhically); 'to declaim, expound' in a public address. All of these share the connotation of an oral rendition. The differences are related to the source (Bible, oral tradition, or else), scope and context (academic learning, addressing a wider public) of the verb, but also the documents in which they occur.

The well-attested use of תרגם for the oral-performative translation in the synagogue requires little comment. Apart from the liturgical translations of Scripture, the verb denotes the interpretation of Hebrew lexemes, whether from the Scriptures or the Mishna, for greater precision and understanding, usually within a halakhic context. This usage of the verb only occurs in the Bavli (and in the later Midrashim, most likely under the influence of the Bavli). A typical example is b. B. Bat. 61a, asking what exactly is included in the sale of a house: מאי יציע הכא תרגימו אפתא רב: 'What is a "yaši'a" (story, m. B. Bat. 4.1)? Here they interpret, Upper room. Rav Yoseph said, Open balustrade'.¹³ The exact indentification of the 'story' is of importance, since the Mishna excludes it from the sale.

In the Mishna and the Tosefta, the verb only pertains to Bible translation, almost exclusively within the context of the synagogue.¹⁴ The additional meanings 'interpret', 'state', 'expound' and 'declaim' do not occur in the Tosefta and the Mishna. The semantic range in the early Midrashim is hardly more varied than that of the Mishna and the Tosefta. All instances but two concern biblical translation. In Lev. R. 9.5, at the negative end of the semantic range, תרגם assumes the meaning of 'blazoning, declaiming':

אוילים יליץ אשם אמ' ר' יודן הטיפש הזה מתרגם חובתו מפיו ואמ' לא חטאת אני
חייב ולא אשם אני חייב

'The fools scoff at their guilt' (Prov. 14.9). R. Yudan said, This fool blazons his debt about by his own mouth, as he says, Am I not liable to a sin-offering? Am I not liable to a guilt-offering?

The interpretation is based on the hiphil of ליץ in Prov. 14.9, which has the meaning 'interpreter, spokesman, mediator' in Biblical and Qumran

¹³Following Hamr65 with the reading ברקא (supported by Flor and H1337), rather than בודקא. The meaning of this noun is uncertain; Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 247. See also, without being exhaustive, b. B. Bat. 68a; 69a (2x); 168a.

¹⁴The exception is t. B. Meṣ. 2.21, where it seems to refer to a private translation of a Biblical scroll.

Hebrew.¹⁵ In other passages, LXX and the Targums concur on this understanding of לִיץ.¹⁶ R. Yudan conveys the public, declamatory nature of the culprit's action and interprets it as a public and strident boast of his sins. A similar sense of a declamation that is loud and injudicious occurs occasionally with the noun מְתוֹרְגָמִן.¹⁷ Presumably, the verb has a neutral meaning of its own. More familiar is the meaning 'expound', but it is found only once in the early Midrashim. In Est. R. 3.12,¹⁸ the verb תִּרְגַּם applies to R. Yaaqov b. Avina before Yiṣḥaq, who expounds Est. 1.10 in Hebrew as an acronym.

In the Yerushalmi a more expanded range of meanings occurs, shared by later Midrashim: 'translate', 'expound', 'interpret, resolve'. The first of these is still the most widespread use of תִּרְגַּם, the vast majority of instances involving biblical translations, but there are five exceptions related to preaching and halakhic interpretation.

A well-known literary figure is the frequently rebuked teacher Yaaqov of Kfar Navora, who knew his Bible but never made the grade to a rabbinic title. Several Midrashim recount his erratical teaching (חִוְרָה) that fish require ritual slaughtering and that the son of a gentile mother may be circumcized on the shabbat—with the Yerushalmi circumventing the latter description by the verb סָבַר 'he thought, was of the opinion of'.¹⁹ On two occasions, his teaching enjoys a more favourable reception when Yaaqov expounds (תִּרְגַּם) a biblical verse, as in y. Bik. 3.3, 65d:

¹⁵D.J.A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (8 vols.; Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2011), IV, p. 544; H.N. Richardson, 'Some Notes on לִיץ and Its Derivates', VT 5 (1955), pp. 163–79.

¹⁶TgOnq Gen. 42.23 מְתוֹרְגָמִין, LXX ἐρμηνεύοντες; TgChr 2 32.31 בְּמִתּוֹרְגָמִי. Note that TgJob 16.20 and 33.23 render the word with פִּלְקִטְרִי and פִּרְקִלִּיטָא, TgJon Isa. 43.27 with וּמִלְפָּךְ.

¹⁷Qoh. R. 7.5; 9.17; see p. 174 below.

¹⁸This section would be part of the Amoraic Midrash; see Lerner, 'The Works of Aggadic Midrash', pp. 181–82, with reference to earlier analysis and datings. See also Cant. R. 5.5 and Cant. R 5.5 for other expositions by Yaaqov b. Avina introduced by תִּרְגַּם. A similar use applies to R. Tanḥuma of the house of R. Abba in Pes. R. 47.20 (edn Ulmer).

¹⁹y. Yev. 2.5(6), 4a: יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ כָּפַר נְבוּרִיָּה אֵל לְצוּר אֲתוֹן שְׁאֵלִין לִיה מִהוּ מִיגוֹר בְּרִיָּה דִּארְמִייתָא: 'Yaaqov of Kfar Navora went to Tyre. They came to him and asked, Is it permitted to circumcise the son of an Aramaean [= Gentile] woman on the shabbat? He was of the opinion that it is allowed to them from this verse...' (with corrections of scribal mistakes). Parallels: y. Qid. 3.12(14), 64d; Gen. R. 7.2; Num. R. 19.3; Qoh. R. 7.35; Pes. K. 64.6; Tan. חֲקַת 6; TanB. חֲקַת 15.

ר' זעירא וחד מן רבנן הווין יתיבין עבר חד מן אילין דמיתמני בכסף אמ' יתיה דמן רבנין לר' זעירא נעביד נפשו תניי ולא ניקום לון מקומי תירגם יעקב איש כפר נבוריא הוי אומר לעץ הקיצה עורי לאבן דומם הוא יורה יודע הוא יורה הנה הוא תפוש זה [ב] וכסף לא בכספייא איתמני וכל רוח אין בקרבו לא חכים כלום

R. Zeira and one of the rabbis had a session when one of those who were appointed for money passed by. One among the rabbis said, Let us be teaching so we will not [have to] stand up for him. Yaaqov of Kfar Navora interpreted, 'Ah, you who say, "Wake up" to wood, "Awaken" to inert stone! Can that give a teaching?' (Hab. 2.19). Does he know how to teach? 'Why, it is encased in gold and silver': One should not be appointed for money. 'But there is no breath inside it': He does not know anything.

Yaaqov's take on Hab. 2.19 (תרגם) follows the spur to teach (תני). What he teaches is a sardonic application of this verse to a wealthy passer-by, expressing Habakkuk's disdain for empty idols in terms of rabbinic dismay at the ignorance of affluent leaders who bought positions without being able to contribute anything meaningful.²⁰ In the parallel tradition of b. San. 7b, the same criticism is levelled at an incompetent judge appointed by R. Yehuda Nesia, this time by R. Yehuda b. Naḥmani the meturgeman of Resh Laqish, who is set up as the judge's *amora* 'spokesman'. As the judge remains silent, his meturgeman opens with this withering accusation, reinforced by Resh Laqish who compares the appointment of an incompetent judge to the planting of an Ashera.

In this expressive sense of 'exposition', the verb also applies to Yose of Maon's interpretation of Hos. 5.1: בכנישתא בטיבריה 'Yose of Maon expounded in the synagogue of Tiberias'.²¹ His sermon dwells at the neglect of proper support for the priests, which enrages Rabbi. This hermeneutic application of Hos. 5.1 exists in an Aramaic and in a Hebrew version, which itself attests to the way such narratives could be transposed, but its original language is inconsequential: its content is expository and homiletical, not translational in the conventional sense.

Yose of Maon's preaching is the last example of תרגם in this meaning in the Yerushalmi, three instances in all. They apply to non-rabbinic teachers whose credentials are not always trusted when they perform a public rendition of the meaning of the Hebrew Bible. Thus the semantic range of

²⁰ More explicit in condemnation is Midr. Sam. 7.6 with the same tradition, but more Aramaic comments directed against the money-grabbing wealthy.

²¹ So y. San. 2.5, 20d; a Hebrew parallel in Gen. R. 80.1.

the verb in the Yerushalmi appears to be limited to 'translate' and 'expound, preach', but there are two instructive exceptions to this rule. The following tradition about a Babylonian Amora in Palestine explains a *mishna* (y. Sheq. 5.1, 48d):

בן גבר על נעילת שערים תירגם רב קומי דבית ר' שילה קרא גברא אכריו כרווא אמרו
 ליה קרא תרנוגלא אמ' לון והתנינן בן גבר אית לך מימר בר תרנוגלא
 'Ben Gever is in charge of closing the gates' (m. Sheq. 2.1). Rav interpreted
 before those of the house of R. Shela, 'The man calls' (m. Suk. 5.4), [that is,]
 The crier proclaimed. They said to him, The rooster crows. He said to them,
 But we have learned 'the son of Gever'! Do you [really] have a statement about
 the young of a chicken?

This short unit poses a number of problems. Rav explains how Ben Gever oversees the closing of the gates by the words קרא גברא אכריו כרווא 'The man calls, [that is,] The crier proclaimed'. In these two Aramaic expressions, the second explains the first by way of monolingual translation. The house of R. Shela counter with תרנוגלא קרא 'The rooster crows', as an alternative monolingual translation of 'gavra calls'. But how does קרא גברא enter the discourse? Since the house of R. Shela advance an alternative interpretation of this expression, it is likely to be a quotation of another passage which is drawn into the discussion to shed light on Ben Gever's charge. Thus קרא גברא appears to be an Aramaic translation of the term קרא הגבר in m. Suk. 5.4, which is traditionally understood to refer to a crowing rooster at the break of dawn. The context in m. Suk. 5.4 deals with a festival procession about to enter one of the gates. Thus both sides render קרא הגבר in Aramaic to shed light on the way Ben Gever goes about his duties; either he is the crier who shouts around orders and announcements, or he is a crowing rooster.

On the face of it, both sides have recourse to an Aramaic translation in interpreting the *mishna*. Yet that is not what תרגם is about here. Rav 'quotes' m. Suk. 5.4 in Aramaic already—which may have been either an alternative formulation of that *mishna* or its translation—followed by an expressive translation in the same language that קרא גברא 'the man calls out' means אכריו כרווא 'the crier announces'. But there is more to Rav's interpretation. He presumably reads בן גבר על נעילת שערים in conjunction with the preceding clause in m. Sheq. 5.1: גביני כרוו, 'Gebini is the herald, (a man in charge of closing the gates)', thus explaining the herald's activity by way of m. Suk. 5.4 as 'calling'. Necessary to avoid the fallacy of ambiguity in

the literal translation of קרא הגבר into קרא גברא, the second translation as applied to m. Sheq. 2.1 arguably is the real act of תרגום. Ultimately, then, they interpret a mishna that is not translated itself but read in the light of an expressive translation of another mishna that bears on the 'heralding' element preceding the topical mishna's key terms. Accordingly, תרגום denotes a complex operation of reading בן גבר in conjunction with m. Suk. 5.4 and the preceding clause in m. Sheq. 5.1.

It is important to realize that the story is located in Babylonia at the house of R. Shela. First, the story probably originated in Babylonia which explains the untypical use of תרגום. Second, the parallel in b. Yom. 20b sheds another light on the interpretative move. Rav interprets a different source text in his function of amora to R. Shela (cited according to MS Mun6):

מאי קרות הגבר רב אמ' קרא גברא ר' שילא אמ' קרא תרנוגלא רב איקלע לאתריה דר' שילא קם עליה באמורא²² כי מטא הכא פריש קרא גברא אמ' ליה נימא מר קרא תרנוגלא א' ליה אבוב לחרי זמר [ל]גירדאי השתא לא קבלוה כי הוה קרינא עליה דרבי²³ ומפרישנא קרא גברא לא אמ' לי ולא מידי ואת אמרת קרא תרנוגלא אמ' ליה מר ניהו רב נינח מר אמ' ליה [אי] איתגרת לן[יה] פוץ עמר[יה] איכא דאמרי אמ' ליה מעלין בקדש ולא מורידין

What does קרות הגבר (m. Yom. 1.8) mean? Rav said, The call of a man, R. Shela said, The crow of the rooster. Rav happened to come to the place of R. Shela [and] stood next to him as a spokesman. When he reached this phrase [קרות הגבר], he explained, The man calls. He [R. Shela] said to him, Master, let us say, The rooster crows! He said, The flute is music for nobles, but weavers, they did not accept it. When I recited before Rabbi and interpreted [the phrase as] The man calls, he did not say anything [disapproving] to me. But you—you tell me, The rooster crows! He said to him, Master, you are Rav, would you sit down, Master! He said to him, If you have hired yourself out, hackle his wool! There are some who say, He said to him, One may promote a man in holy things, but not demote him.

The Bavli puts Rav in the lowly position of R. Shela's turgeman, who stands awkwardly corrected when R. Shela disagrees with his translation of a key phrase in the Mishna. Rav does not תרגום in the Bavli, as in the Yerushalmi, but פרש 'explain, interpret'; yet his position as turgeman and his disputed translation of the mishna may have brought about the use of תרגום in the

²² Several witnesses have a plus to explain Rav's position as an amora: לא הוה אמורא (Mun95, Ox23, Spet, Vat134, Ven), for קם עליה באמורא (Mun6 is supported by Lon400 and Rab218).

²³ דר' חייא: Ox23 and Ven. so Mun6, Lon400, Mun95, Rabr623, Rab218, Spet, Vat134.

oral transmission of this tradition. Moreover, the dispute has a different source text in the Bavli, as Rav does not interpret m. Sheq. 5.1 but m. Yom. 1.8's קרות הגבר (or the variant קריאת הגבר),²⁴ which provides a more transparent and thus more likely source text for his translation קרא גברא than the convoluted reasoning in y. Sheq. 5.1, 48d. There, the phrase קרא גברא appears out of the blue and m. Suk. 5.4 only looks like a credible source when pressed for one, as there are no convincing alternatives. Moreover, in the anonymous exploration of the support for Rav and R. Shela in b. Yom. 20b (not quoted above), 'Gebini is the herald' (m. Sheq. 5.1) is cited as proof for Rav's view, which, if part of the original tradition, may explain how it ended up in y. Sheq. 5.1, 48d. Plausibly, the dispute became disconnected from m. Yom. 1.8 during the oral history of this tradition and reconnected to m. Sheq. 5.1. All this is not to suggest that the Babylonian version is more authentic as it stands than the Yerushalmi version. The Bavli has been shown to profess a profound interest in the hierarchy of the rabbinic world, reflecting the more hierarchical context of Babylonian Jewry.²⁵ The way Rav and R. Shela lock horns may even result from the interest later editors took in the sharp edges of rabbinic dialectics,²⁶ although the Yerushalmi has Rav in a similar, though less edgy, position of interpreting before the House of Shela. The Bavli's special interest rather explains why this tradition was selected for preservation and embellishment: the variant readings, explaining Rav's position, and concluding statements ('hackle his wool', do whatever is asked; 'one may not demote') give expression to embarrassment, honour and shame. Regardless of the putative original form of the dispute, the Babylonian parallel illustrates the translational nature of Rav's interpretation as a turgeman.

The second exception concerns lexical interpretation (y. Suk. 5.3, 55b):

מהו מפקיעין תירגם ר' חגי קומי ר' יוסה מפשלים

What does 'they make splits' mean? R. Ḥaggai interpreted before R. Yose, 'They twist [them and make wicks]'.²⁷

²⁴Mishna: Kaufman A50, Modena, Parma קרות הגבר; Albeck's edn reads קריאת הגבר. The Mishna as quoted in the Bavli: Lon400, Mun6 קרות הגבר; Mun95, Rab218, Ox23, Vati34 and Ven קריאת הגבר; Spet קרית הגבר.

²⁵R. Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999); Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*.

²⁶See J.L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

This example involves translation of a kind: R. Ḥaggai translates one particular lexeme from Hebrew into Hebrew as a Hebrew-only dictionary would do, and thereby adds halakhic precision to the *mishna* and explains a received norm in 'real' terms. The focus is to define as precisely as possible what the Hebrew lexeme refers to in the context of halakhic rulings. R. Ḥaggai does not preach, lecture, resolve a contradiction or make any authoritative halakhic statements; he interprets the semantics of one particular lexeme. Essentially, the hermeneutic activity of these last two instances is quite common for rabbinic literature as a whole, which renders it all the more remarkable that such activity is not usually called תרגום in the West.

Rare though the use of תרגום in the latter sense of halakhic interpretation is in the *Yerushalmi*, it is frequently used in the *Bavli* as an explanation of Hebrew lexemes or resolutions of halakhic positions. Three examples from the *Bavli* will suffice. A distinct type of translation of a lexeme in the *Mishna* (b. *San.* 25a according to MS Flor):

מאי מפריחי יוני? הכא תרגימו אי תקדמיה יונן ליון רב חמא בר אבשיא אמר
 What are מפריחי יוני? ('pigeon trainers')? Here [in Babylonia] they interpret
 [this word to denote one who says to another], 'If your pigeon passes mine
 [you win]'. R. Ḥama b. Oshaya said, '[One who employs] a decoy-bird'.²⁷

The context of this passage concerns people who are unsuitable for and disqualified from serving as witnesses (m. *San.* 3.3). The Hebrew lexeme מפריחי represents one group of people, but what exactly do they do that warrants their exclusion? The *gemara* provides two answers, one introduced by תרגום, the other by אמר. They are either gamblers or thieves. The first answer conveys the nature of their activities with an instantly recognizable catchphrase for the pigeon-trainer ('If your pigeon passes mine'), the latter with the tools of those who lure birds they do not own themselves ('decoy-bird'). Although both interpretations are given in Aramaic, neither serves as a running, comprehensive translation of the *Mishna* that can stand on its own. On the other hand, both interpretations do serve as a suitable 'translation' of the suggested profession in a halakhically relevant search for lexical precision. These comments serve the interpretation of a Hebrew lexeme and are tailored to their function. As such, the language

²⁷For this translation, with some minor changes, see D. Weisberg, 'Some Observations on Late Babylonian Texts and Rabbinic Literature', *HUCA* 39 (1968), pp. 71–80 (76–77).

of interpretation does not have to be Aramaic; often, in fact, it is Hebrew, and the translation is monolingual. The scope of such translations differs from that of the comprehensive Aramaic Bible translations. They represent 'oral interpretative statements', and in many instances reflect authoritative rulings or resolutions.

In the Bavli, the predominant meaning of the verb תרגם is the latter sense of 'interpret, explain', often from Hebrew into Hebrew, when the verb does not refer to the act, agent or result of a comprehensive, running translation from one language into another. Illustrative is R. Yoḥanan's exclamation in b. San. 62b:

דאמר רבי יוחנן מאן דמתרגם לי חבית אליבא דחד תנא מובילנא מאניה בתריה לבי
מסותא

For R. Yoḥanan said, He who explains to me the mishna of 'a jug' to agree with one Tanna entirely, I shall carry his attire after him to the baths.

This sigh follows a lengthy discussion of a *baraita* about the relative stringency of the shabbat and all other commandments. R. Yoḥanan's words are quoted from another discussion, which bears some similarity with the issue discussed here. That passage concerns a famously difficult mishna about a jug which elicited his exclamation in the first place (m. B. Meṣ. 3.9).²⁸ In b. B. Meṣ. 41a the *gemara* discusses this case of a jug which was deposited with someone else who subsequently moves and breaks it. The discussion attempts to establish whether the custodian is liable, to what extent he is or is not and under which conditions. In both cases, the relative stringency of the shabbat and the mishna of the deposited jug are similar to the extent that the *gemara* differentiates between the first and second half of a mishna, the first half agreeing with one Tanna, the second with another. This similarity triggered the reference to R. Yoḥanan's exclamation.²⁹ The verb תרגם at this point means 'explain, resolve' an interpretative difficulty in a mishna.

²⁸Following Flor (b. B. Meṣ. 41a): ר' ישמע' וסיפא ר' עקיב' אמ' רב יוסף אין דאמ' ר' ר' The first clause [agrees with] R. Ishmael, and the second [with] R. Aqiva? Yes, said Rav Yoseph, for R. Yoḥanan said, Who explains to me [the mishna of] "a jug" so as to agree with one Tanna, I shall carry his attire after him to the baths'. The clause of Rav Yoseph (אין רב יוסף) is not attested in Ham165, EscGI3, or Vilna, but supported by Mun95 and Vat115. This exclamation is followed by two further instances of תרגם as 'interpreting' a mishna.

²⁹In addition to b. B. Meṣ. 41a, the exclamation is twice cited in b. Eruv. 27b in connection with a different issue.

Such hermeneutics may involve explicit commentary on a given text, as in b. San. 87a:

אמר ליה רב הונא בר חנינא לרבא תרגמא לי להא מתניתא אליבא דרבי מאיר אמר
ליה רבא לרב פפא פוק תרגמא ליה

R. Huna b. Hinnena said to Rava, Explain to me that *baraita* according to
R. Meir. Said Rava to Rav Papa, Go forth and explain to him.

Rav Papa then recites the *baraita*, with midrashic comments of the type תרגם מדרב 'Scripture is speaking of...,' זה 'this [refers to]...'. The verb introduces a commentary on a Tannaitic tradition, seeking to resolve a difficulty.

In the sense of 'explain, interpret' halakhically relevant issues the verb occurs about a hundred-and-forty times concerning the Hebrew Bible,³⁰ *mishnayyot*,³¹ *baraitot*³² and Amoraic statements,³³ and less frequently it simply refers to a halakhic teaching of an Amora,³⁴ over against seventy-seven times when it does refer to translating proper.³⁵ In the Yerushalmi,

³⁰For interpretations in Aramaic, see b. San. 25b; 96b; b. Zev. 54a. Cf. y. San. 2.5, 20d. In Hebrew, see b. B. Meṣ. 113a. As with the noun in the Vilna, there are many variant readings in the MSS which frequently attest תרגומא rather than the verb. I do not record all these instances here, the point has been made sufficiently.

³¹See b. Ber. 24a; b. Shab. 60a; 150b; 156b; b. Eruv. 88b; b. Pes. 42b; b. Yom. 61a; b. Suk. 10b; 19a; 20b; b. R. Hash. 18a; 30b; b. Ket. 107a; 110a; b. Sot. 8b; b. Git. 60b; b. Qid. 48b; 53b; b. B. Qam. 104a; b. B. Meṣ. 20a; 41a (3x); 78b; b. B. Bat. 61a; 68a; 69a (2x); 88a; 107b; 146a; 157a; 168a; b. San. 45b; 62b; b. A. Zar. 41b; 42a; 72b; b. Zev. 85a (2x); b. Ḥul. 123b; 138a; b. Bek. 18a; 44a; b. Nid. 43a.

³²See b. Ber. 18a; 19b (2x); 57b; b. Shab. 52b; 80a; 82a; 115b; 123a; 136a; 139b; b. Eruv. 27b (2x); b. Taan. 10b; b. Pes. 73b; 86a; b. Sot. 22a; b. Ket. 23a; 53b; 107b (2x); b. B. Qam. 18a; 22a; 31b; 68a; 91b; b. B. Meṣ. 22a (2x); 27a; 60b; 80b; 107a; 109a; b. B. Bat. 77b; 78b; 136b; b. San. 8b; 41a; 46a; 48b; 87a (2x); 90a; b. A. Zar. 11b; 40a; 57a; 57b; b. Zev. 54a (2x); 118a; b. Men. 16a; 43a; b. Ḥul. 74b; b. Bek. 60a; 61a; b. Arak. 33b; b. Naz. 50b; b. Ker. 15a.

³³b. Ber. 14a; 51a; b. Shab. 22b; 110b; 124a; 134b; 140a; b. Eruv. 26b; 28a; b. Pes. 12b; 16a; b. Yev. 9b (3x); 28b (3x); 77a; b. Ned. 38b; b. Git. 19b; 41a; b. Ket. 22b; 97b; 110a; b. B. Meṣ. 46b; 77b; b. B. Qam. 52a; 83a; b. B. Bat. 13b (2x); b. A. Zar. 54a; 63b; b. Zev. 90b (2x); b. Ḥul. 133b; b. Bek. 39b; 55a; b. Ker. 27b; b. Nid. 5b.

³⁴Halakhic teaching without explicit reference to any source: b. Shab. 43b; 53a (2x); b. Ḥul. 76b; 113a.

³⁵The verb occurs 29 times in b. Meg. 24a–26b alone; Ber. 28a; 45a (3x); Shab. 10b; 28a; 64a; 68a; R. Hash. 22b; 27a (2x); 33b; Yom. 32b; 77b; Meg. 10b; 24a (3x); 25a (10x); 26b (16x); M. Qat. 2a (2x); 26a; Ned. 38a; Naz. 3a [variant reading]; 39a; Sot. 39b (2x); 48b; Git. 68a (2x); 68b; Qid. 13a; 49a (3x); 72b; B. Qam. 3b; 38a; 116b; B. Meṣ. 29b; B. Bat. 12b; 74b; San. 22a; 106b; A. Zar. 17b; 44a (2x); Men. 110a; Ḥul. 80a; 139b; Bek. 50a; Arak. 15b; Nid. 31b.

by contrast, the verb occurs fifty-three times in the sense of translating, twice in the sense of interpreting and three times in the sense of public exposition as observed above. The classical Midrashim do not have a single occurrence of תרגם as 'interpret (halakhically)'. This remarkable distinction is balanced by the frequent use of פתר in the Yerushalmi for interpretations of biblical and tannaitic traditions, which rarely occurs in the Bavli.³⁶

That this distinction is not a mere statistical distortion but a difference in terminology follows from the expression הכא תרגימו...במערבא אמרי 'here [in Babylonia] they interpret...there [in Palestine] they say...', which occurs seven times in the Bavli.³⁷ The expression signals a difference of interpretation between Babylonian and Palestinian rabbis, with the object of these different opinions ranging from a Hebrew lexeme to an Amoraic statement. A mishnaic lexeme is clarified in b. B. Meṣ. 20a:

מאי שטרי בירורין הכא תרגמו שטרי טענתא רבי ירמיה אמר זה בורר לו אחד וזה
בורר לו אחד

What are 'deeds of arbitration'? — Here [in Babylonia] they interpreted, 'records of claims'. Yirmeya said, [Documents stating] 'this [party] chooses one [judge], and that [party] chooses another [judge]'.

The interpretations are both based on the root ברר in the meanings 'prove, provide evidence' and 'select' respectively. The Babylonian interpretation is a translation into Aramaic, whereas Yirmeya provides a Hebrew paraphrase. These two different styles of translation both convey the perceived meaning of the Hebrew word in question, with the Palestinian tradent 'saying' rather than 'interpreting'. An Amoraic statement is explained in b. Taan. 10b:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רבי חייא המהלך בדרך אל יאכל יותר משני רעבון מאי טעמא
הכא תרגימו משום מעיינא במערבא אמרי משום מזוני
Said Rav Yehuda in the name of R. Ḥiyya, Who journeys on the road should not eat more than [one eats] in years of famine. What is the reason? Here [in Babylonia] they explained, Because of the bowels; in Palestine they say, Because of provisions.

Here the 'explanation' is one that provides the reason for an Amoraic tradition without a lexemic translation; what is 'translated' is the reason

³⁶For פתר, see Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, II, pp. 178–80. See also Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 456; Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 949.

³⁷See b. Taan. 10b; Yev. 77a; Ned. 38b; Git. 68a; San. 103b; Zev. 90b. See further Midr. Ps. 78.12. For a discussion of translations marked by this header, see below, section 8.5 p. 399.

underlying R. Hiyya's statement. The consistency of the terminological divide is remarkable. Indeed, in b. San. 25a quoted above, the Palestinian R. Oshaya b. Hama uses the verb אמר, while the alternative interpretation is marked by הכא תרגימו 'Here [in Babylonia] they interpret'. In an elliptic fashion, the distinction between 'interpret, explain' and 'say' is far more common. The expression הכא תרגימו 'Here [in Babylonia] they interpret' on its own occurs fifteen times, usually in contrast to an interpretation ascribed to a Palestinian rabbi.³⁸ The second element, inverted as אמרי במערבא occurs 66 times in the Bavli,³⁹ whereas the comparable expression הכא אמרי does not occur in the Bavli, but occasionally in Western sources.⁴⁰

Does the difference in the use of terminology tell us anything about rabbinic views of interpretation and translation? It is hard to verify, but

³⁸b. San. 25a (Palestinian view: R. Oshaya b. Hama); b. R. Hash. 18a (Resh Laqish); 30b (R. Zera); b. Sot. 22a (R. Abba); b. B. Meṣ. 20a (Yirmeya; par. b. B. Bat. 168a); b. B. Bat. 68a (Shimon ben Avtolos). Unclear to an extent is b. B. Qam. 52a, because the reference to R. Yaaqov may apply to several people, although the context suggests that his opinion is indeed Palestinian, and it is one of the opinions expressed in y. Qid. 1.4, 60b. A doubtful case is b. Pes. 42b (1° instance), because no contrastive opinion follows, and important mss entirely lack the phrase הכא תרגימו: Mun6, Rab1608, Rab1623, ColX. Moreover, the mss also do not quote the mishnaic literally (with Mun95 as the exception): וזמן של צבעין with minor variants rather than וזמן של צבעים וכו'. Finally, the closing words דצבעין ברו (Vilna's לברא is a scribal error, shared with Vat134 and Mun95) are absent from Mun6, Rab1608, Vat109, Vat125.

Exceptions are b. Pes. 42b (2° instance, Rav Shimi of Maḥoza); b. B. Meṣ. 60b (Zeiri in the name of Rav Kahana); b. B. Bat. 61a (Rav Yoseph); b. Men. 43a (Rav Yehuda). Bacher expressed the opinion that 'here they interpret' might refer to the academy of Sura, since the contrast is with the head of Pumbeditha in Men. 43a (*Die exegetische terminologie*, II, p. 244). The same applies to b. B. Bat. 61a, but not to b. Meṣ. 60b.

³⁹See b. Ber. 8a; 14b; b. Shab. 13b; 108a; b. Eruv. 3a; b. Yom. 55b; 64a; 86b; b. Suk. 10a; b. Beṣ. 8b; b. Taan. 2b; 8b; 10a; 10b; b. Meg. 18a; b. Ḥag. 15b; b. M. Qat. 8a; b. Yev. 21b; 62b; b. Ket. 19b; 196a; b. Ned. 3b; 41a; b. Naz. 20b; b. Sot. 18b; 24b; b. Git. 24b; b. B. Qam. 9b; 27b; 64b; 91a; b. B. Meṣ. 94b; b. B. Bat. 16b; 80a; b. San. 17b; 23a; 69a; 70a; 100a; b. Shevu. 5a; b. Hor. 13a; b. Zev. 44a; 81b; 89b; 90b (in the context of the full phrase); 91b; 105a; b. Men. 102b; b. Ḥul. 32a; 50b; 52b; 55a; 55b; 57a; 66b; 119b; 120a; b. Bek. 8a; 13a; 15b; 33b; 45b; b. Arak. 15b (2x); b. Tem. 24a; b. Ker. 24b; variations, for example, occur in b. Shab. 150b, במערבא אמרין, הכי, in Yev. 63b, במערבא אמרו, in b. Men. 40b (2x) as ויתמר במערבא. Moreover, it occurs without the verb אמר but with הכי and sometimes מתני.

⁴⁰Once in Gen. R. 80.1 in several witnesses (edn Theodor-Albeck, p. 952; main text כהנא אמר) and once in the Yerushalmi (y. Shevi. 10.3[5], 39d). In passing, Midr. Sam. 10.10 quotes a tradition from the Bavli, otherwise incorporating only Palestinian traditions, and it does so with the words תמן אמרין 'There they say'.

the difference is unlikely to be one of dialect, so the possibility exists that this distinction indeed reflects different realities and perceptions of scriptural translation. It should be noted that the Tannaitic sources do not reflect a use of the verb other than that of scriptural translation, while the Yerushalmi also still uses the verb almost exclusively of a translation in the modern sense of the word; in particular, it uses the verb seven times with regard to Aquila's translation,⁴¹ in common with the Midrashim;⁴² here, the Bavli lists no occurrence at all. Conversely, when we turn to the phrase מתרגמין 'we interpret',⁴³ we find that it occurs fifteen times in the Bavli and even more often in the later Midrashim, but not once in the Yerushalmi or the early Midrashim.

The difference is real enough, but any explanation remains tentative. Since the use of the verb is closely associated with Aquila in the Yerushalmi, albeit not exclusively, the verb may not connote the expository concept of translation that has become the hallmark of the Aramaic Bible translations. Palestinian rabbis distinguished between Greek translations, which might be written, and Aramaic ones which should not. That may explain their use of the verb אמר for oral hermeneutics, where the Babylonians use תרגם. In their distinctive ways, both Palestinian and Babylonian Amoraim agree on the oral-performative character of the translations but they express this differently. The Palestinian use of the verbs אמר and פתר for the same purposes for which their Babylonian peers use תרגם underlines the common denominator of a public rendition. The aspect of orality extended to the Aramaic Bible translations, as in b. Meg. 3a, where the Western proselyte Onqelos 'said' the translation of the Tora, but not to Greek versions which sages 'wrote' for King Ptolemy, while the translation ascribed to Aquila is invariably referred to an activity in the past, 'Aquila translated'. This, I suggest, is related to the written character of this version as opposed to the predominant oral mode of transmission for the Aramaic

⁴¹General: y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c. Greek: y. Suk. 3.5, 53d; y. Shab. 6.4, 8b; y. Meg. 2.3, 73b; y. M. Qat. 3.7, 83b; y. Yom. 3.8, 41a. Hebrew: y. Qid. 1.1, 59a.

⁴²Greek: Gen. R. 33.6; 46.3; Lev. R. 11.9; 30.8; 33.1, 6; 93.3; Est. R. 2.7; Cant. R. 1.3 (on 1.3); 4.24 (on 4.11); 4.26 (on 4.13); Lam. R. 1.1 (Buber 21b); Pes. K. 11.8; 27.9; Qoh. R. 1.11, 30. Hebrew: Gen. R. 21.1; TanB. וישלח 30. Aramaic: Qoh. R. 11.3. For these instances, see G. Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum Aquilas: Ein Beitrag zum rabbinischen Übersetzungsverständnis', in M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer (eds.), *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum* (WUNT, 72; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), pp. 92–115; Veltri, *Eine Tora*.

⁴³See below, Ch. Eight.

versions ('as we translate', 'as Rav Yoseph translates'). The uniquely oral connotation of the root תרגם came to full fruition in Babylonia, whereas the Yerushalmi retained the earlier and more restricted connotation.

4.3 מתורגמן, תורגמן 'interpreter; public speaker'

The nouns מתורגמן and תורגמן denote 'interpreter' (within and without the synagogue); 'public speaker, spokesman'.⁴⁴ They denote two different functions, translating and serving as the mouthpiece of a leading rabbi, in three distinct performances: interpreting at the court of law, performing the oral Bible translation, and rendering the words of a leading sage into public speech. The difference between these functions was blurred to the extent that the terms מתורגמן and תורגמן denote both functions of performing a public rendition.

There is neither a discernible semantic distinction between these related nouns nor in their use between Palestinian and Babylonian sources. Tannaitic sources attest to the service of a turgeman as a spokesman, legal interpreter, or synagogue interpreter.⁴⁵ In the Yerushalmi, the same offices occur (without implying any permanent appointments).⁴⁶ The same functions are well attested in the Bavli, despite the fact that it is sometimes impossible to determine whether 'PN the Interpreter' refers to a spokesman or a translator—in fact such functionaries may have acted as both.⁴⁷ Where possible, however, to distinguish between them, all three

⁴⁴See Shinan, אחד ותרגומים הרבה: אגדתם של מתורגמנים, pp. 1–38; A. Shinan, ספורי התורה בראי התרגומים הארמיים (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1993), pp. 19–31; P.S. Alexander, 'The Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum', in J.A. Emerton (ed.), Congress Volume Salamanca 1983 (VTSup. 36; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), pp. 14–28 (24–25).

⁴⁵m. Meg. 4.4 (2x); m. Mak. 1.9; t. Meg. 2.5; 3.41; t. San. 7.7; Sifre Num. 140; Sifre Deut. 176, 188, 305. Note that the noun מתורגמן does not occur in any of these sources. However, the citation of m. Meg. 4.4 in b. Meg. 23b–24a reads מתורגמן twice.

⁴⁶y. Meg. 4.11(10), 75c; y. Ber. 4.1, 7d; y. Taan. 4.1, 67d; y. Meg. 4.3, 75a (3x); y. Yev. 16.7, 16a (2x); y. Ned. 10.10(8), 42a (2x); y. Sot. 7.1, 21b (2x).

⁴⁷As a permanent functionary, the reference is more likely to that of a mouth-piece; see the references to חֲסִפִּית הַתּוֹרָגְמָן 'Ḥuspit the Interpreter' in y. Ber. 4.1, 7d; y. Taan. 4.1, 67d; Lam. R. 2.2,4; b. Qid. 39b; b. Ber. 27b; b. Bek. 36a; b. Ḥul. 142a; Midr. Ps. 9.13. Contrast, however, y. Ned. 10.10(8), 42a.

functions balance each other out.⁴⁸ In some cases, the *meturgeman* appears to act as a representative of the congregation (whether of sages or of the community) when he is asked to dismiss the people or pray for rain during the festival of Pesah.⁴⁹

Veltri construes the latter cases as a difference between Palestine and Babylonia.⁵⁰ the institution of the *targumist* as an *amora* would have been more prominent in Babylonia than in Palestine, where the *meturgeman* mainly served as a liturgical assistant. According to b. Ber. 27b, he argues, the *turgeman* is asked to stop his delivery, עמוד, whereas in y. Ber. 4.1, 7d the *meturgeman* is asked to dismiss the people, הפטר את העם. Yet the context of dismissal is the *bet midrash* (Bavli) or assembly (בית הוועד, Yerushalmi), not the synagogue service, while the difference between the Bavli and Yerushalmi should be understood in connection with all the differences between the two stories.⁵¹ Moreover, the request for rain in the Bavli is liturgical, whereas the function of spokesman before the sage in the Yerushalmi is not.⁵² The Bavli refers to the *meturgemanim* of Resh Laqish and Tanḥuma bar Ḥiyya, both Palestinian sages, which, given the presence of spokesmen in Palestinian sources, need not be ascribed to a process of transculturation in the Bavli. All in all, the role of the *meturgeman* in these texts agrees with the basic meaning of a public speaker as a representative of the gathering.

Two near synonyms exist, each overlapping with one of the two meanings of (me)turgeman. A מתרגם denotes 'one who translates', invariably in the context of Bible translation as part of the synagogue service or as a quotation within a rabbinic discourse (in the introductory phrases 'as we translate', 'as Rav Yoseph translates'). An אמורא is a 'speaker (spokesman)' who stands next to his rabbi and delivers his speech, like the *turgeman*, but the noun also has the general meaning of a scholar in the post-Tannaitic period who is capable to transmit and interpret independently from another sage.⁵³ These four terms (מתורגמן, תורגמן, מתרגם and אמורא) construe

⁴⁸ See, e.g., b. Pes. 50b; 117a; b. Taan. 4b; b. Meg. 18b; 25b; b. M. Qat. 21a (3x); b. Hag. 16a (2x); b. Ket. 8b; b. Sot. 37b; b. Git. 60b; b. San. 7b; 17a; b. Tem. 14b.

⁴⁹ y. Taan. 4.1, 67d; y. Ber. 4.1, 7d; b. Taan. 4b; b. Bek. 36a.

⁵⁰ Veltri, *Eine Tora*, p. 194.

⁵¹ Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, pp. 97–98, 120–21, 139–40.

⁵² b. Taan. 4b; y. Meg. 4.11(10), 75c.

⁵³ For the *amora* as a *turgeman*, see Gen. R. 70.16; b. M. Qat. 21a; b. Yom. 20b; b. Qid. 31b; b. San. 7b.

the function or functionary in slightly different ways:⁵⁴ (me)turgeman signals a role or office, metargem part of the activity in one role (translating). In the latter case, the role may have been permanently assigned to one person (R. Yehuda b. Nahmani the meturgeman of Resh Laqish, R. Hūspit the meturgeman of R. Gamaliel), but in the liturgical Bible translation almost anyone could theoretically serve in the capacity of interpreter: a minor, a blind person, and a poor person who wears ragged clothes. In practice, however, the role may have been assigned to a limited number of people, or even one person, as seems to be the case with Zerubavel son of Shealtiel, according to a geniza text (TS AS 45.6), כְּשֶׁהוּא עוֹמֵד כְּתוּרְגֵמָן מִשְׁפָּחָה 'when he stands as the family turgeman' (in which 'family' may be an early use of מִשְׁפָּחָה in the sense of a 'community').⁵⁵ The theoretical possibility of a wide range of people qualified to perform the translation presumably emphasizes the lower status of targum vis à vis the recitation of the Tora.

Responsibility for the oral delivery of speeches and translations lay with the turgeman or meturgeman, 'interpreter' or 'orator', who accompanied his master and presented his master's words, which were whispered into his ear, to the audience.⁵⁶ As a public speaker, he would faithfully represent the words of his superior, but not necessarily verbatim, and since he was a learned man himself, he could deliver orations independently.⁵⁷ Following b. Pes. 50b he received wages,⁵⁸ but his earnings were not blessed to prevent the impression that his wages applied to work done on the shabbat.⁵⁹ That his salary applies to work done throughout the week, and

⁵⁴Nick-names derived from the root תרגם are given to sons of R. Hīyya, to Hīzqiyya the תורגמינא (Gen. R. 65.11) and to הרובין in y. Hal. 4.8, 60a: תרגמוניא.

⁵⁵See S. Hopkins, *A Miscellany of Literary Pieces from the Cambridge Geniza Collections* (Cambridge University Library, 1978), pp. 12–14. Cf. S. Fine, "Chancel" Screens in Late Antiquity Palestinian Synagogues: A Source from the Cairo Genizah, in H. Lapin (ed.), *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine* (STJHC, 5; Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1999), pp. 67–85, who thinks 'family' is due to a corruption.

⁵⁶Cf. b. Hag. 16a; b. M. Qat. 21a.

⁵⁷See, e.g., Gen. R. 51.9; 65.11; b. Hag. 16a; b. Ket. 8b; b. Sot. 37b, 40a; b. Git. 60b; b. San. 7b; b. Tem. 14b.

⁵⁸See also Gen. R. 98.11.

⁵⁹Following ColX, שְׂכָר הַתּוֹרָגְמָנִין נִמִּי מִשּׁוּם דְּמַחְזִי כִּמְאֵן דְּקָא שְׂקִיל אַגְרָא דְּשַׁבְּתָא (supported by Rab1623). These two mss have this text at a different position from all other witnesses, namely the third of four topics, whereas all others have it in the first position. Mun6 and Rab1608 simply read שְׂכָר שַׁבְּתָא מִשּׁוּם, which boils down to the same point as

not just on shabbat, implies that we deal here with a spokesman, not a Bible interpreter.

The way a *turgeman* communicated a rabbi's teaching to the public was compared to Aaron as Moses' spokesman.⁶⁰ In this capacity, he would not necessarily translate in the sense of interpreting a sage's word into another language, but foremost render his words audible and intelligible. By contrast, references to a *turgeman* in court, some of which are known to have been an *amora* of a sage, undoubtedly refer specifically to language interpretation,⁶¹ as do those to the interpreter in the synagogue.⁶²

Interpreters were necessary wherever proceedings were conducted in a language other than the vernacular. We have already noted that the Greek-speaking bishop of Jerusalem, in the second half of the fourth century, always 'has a presbyter beside him who translates his words into Aramaic', and that the martyr Procopius is said to have translated the Greek Scriptures into Aramaic in his home church of Scythopolis.⁶³ In his case, as in that of the interpreter R. Shmuel b. R. Yish'aq encountered in a fourth century synagogue,⁶⁴ there was no distinction between the functions of reciting and interpreting, for Procopius also read the Scriptures in Greek. The distinction (as well as the lack thereof) may have been a practical necessity, dependent on the availability of literate and multilingual functionaries.

It would be naive to believe that the rabbinic practice of an interpreter took its cue from the biblical account of Moses and Aaron.⁶⁵ The mediation of an interpreter was common practice for high functionaries in the Roman Near East. Roman officials conducted their proceedings in

משום דמיחזי כשכיר שבת in Vat125 and (with minor variants) Mun95, Ox23, Val9, Vatro9, Vat134, TS AS 75.129, Ven and Vilna.

⁶⁰ See n. 65 below.

⁶¹ m. Mak. 1.9; t. San. 7.7; y. Yev. 16.7, 16a; y. Ned. 10.10(8), 42a; b. Men. 65a; b. Mak. 6b; b. San. 17a; Num. R. 9.34.

⁶² See, e.g., m. Meg. 4.4; t. Meg. 2.5.

⁶³ See above, section 3.1 (p. 107).

⁶⁴ y. Meg. 4.1, 74d; A.D. York, 'The Dating of Targumic Literature', JSJ 5 (1974), pp. 49–62.

⁶⁵ Pace H. Sysling, *Tehiyyat Ha-Metim: The Resurrection of the Dead in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch and Parallel Traditions in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (TSAJ, 57; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), pp. 13–14. For Moses and Aaron, see t. Meg. 3.21; TgOnq, TgNeof, TgPsJ, FragTg Exod. 4.16; TgOnq, TgNeof Exod. 7.1; Tan. וַאֲרָא 10; Cant. R. 1.52; Exod. R. 3.17; 8.3. See also Mek. SbY וַאֲרָא 6.

Latin, which required frequent translation. Even apart from administrative needs, interpreters were ubiquitous for legal and commercial reasons.⁶⁶ The interpreter standing before a dignitary gives a powerful expression of the latter's high standing, an impression which would have been reinforced when the leader spoke in a 'high language' with the interpreter to convey the message to the audience in their native tongue. The practice of an intermediary spokesman was conveniently read into the way Aaron and Moses related to one another, just as a *turgeman* was assigned to Yehoshu'a, Ahasveros (until he realized Esther was of royal lineage), and David in the *maskil*-psalms, possibly understanding מִשְׁכִּיל in the sense of 'an instructor, teacher'.⁶⁷ A rabbinic leader who will 'question, respond, and give instruction' required a spokesman, the Holy One advises Moshe, and if he did not want to leave his people without an acknowledged successor, he had to set up a *turgeman* to Yehoshu'a, otherwise the people might not accept him as leader after Moshe's death. That the oratorical rendition of a lecture by an eminent sage and biblical translation are treated on the same terms expresses the oral and intermediary nature of both functions. By the same token, the intermediary nature of the address signals a higher authority: the sage (over the *turgeman*) and the Tora (over the *targum*).

The setting with an interpreter not only emulated the authority of Roman officials, but also served a practical purpose. Interpreters employed rhetorical techniques and could translate wherever necessary. The aspect of translation must have been much more common than is now readily evident from rabbinic literature. At least some holders of the 'office' of

⁶⁶ A. Hermann, 'Dolmetschen im Altertum. Ein Beitrag zur antiken Kulturgeschichte', in K. Thieme, A. Hermann and E. Glässer (eds.), *Schriften des Auslands- und Dolmetscherinstitutes der Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz in Gernersheim* (München: Isar Verlag, 1956), pp. 25–59; R. Calderini, 'De interpretibus quaedam in papyris', *Aegyptus* 33 (1953), pp. 341–46; E.J. Bickerman, 'The Septuagint as a Translation', *PAAJR* 28 (1959), pp. 1–39; Rabin, 'The Translation Process', p. 21. I had no access to W.I. Snellman, *De interpretibus romanorum deque linguae latinae cum aliis nationibus commercio* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1914–1919).

⁶⁷ For Joshua, see Sifre Deut. 305; Sifre Num. 140; ARN A 17. For Ahasveros, with the explicit mention of royal family, see b. Meg. 16a. Elsewhere, his unmediated conversation is attributed to learning that she is Jewish: Lev. R. 26.8; Tan. and TanB. אמר 3. However, in Lam. R. 1.41 he only employs an interpreter after learning that she is Jewish, thus creating distance; cf. Midr. Sam. 24.8. For David, see b. Pes. 117a (מִשְׁכִּיל עַל יְדֵי תוֹרָגְמָן); Midr. Ps. 24.3; the interpretation of this Hebrew noun varies according to its supposed etymology from 'psalm of success', 'responsive song', to 'instructive song'; see Clines, *The Dictionary*, v, pp. 503–504.

turgeman or amora fulfilled both functions, as they translated Hebrew into Aramaic while serving as the sage's loudspeaker. In the Babylonian version of Rav's translation before the House of Shela, as noted above, Rav as the amora of R. Shela comes up with a translation that R. Shela wants to correct. According to Gen. R. 70.16, יוחנן תרגם קודמיו 'the amora of R. Yoḥanan interpreted before him' the scriptural verse of Gen. 29.17, earning him a stern rebuke. In TanB. ויצא 20, a different translation of said verse is offered by the meturgeman of R. Yose, likewise riposted for his poor effort.⁶⁸ These instances of an amora who translates may have been recorded for posterity only because the master disagreed with the translation proffered by his (me)turgeman. For the same reason the reference in y. Ned. 10.10(8), 42a to the translational activity of R. Yoḥanan's turgeman on behalf of R. Ba b. Zutra only occurs because it establishes a precedent for the use of interpreters in the annulment of vows, despite the principle that interpreters were not allowed in legal proceedings.⁶⁹ It would thus seem likely that their translational activity was more extensive, as may be inferred from numerous traditions which exist in Aramaic and Hebrew versions. The rivalry between the mountains when God was about to reveal his Tora underwent several developments,⁷⁰ in both Hebrew and Aramaic, and there is no reason to assume that such developments were constrained by the boundaries of these languages; rather, they crossed language boundaries over and over again. This suggests an interface not only of oral and written sources, but also of Hebrew and Aramaic as target languages. Consequently, orators may also have been responsible for occasional translations of aggadic traditions.

In his analysis of rabbinic orality, Jaffee highlighted rhetorical aspects of textual composition and transmission,⁷¹ which we would also expect to have been operative in the case of the meturgemanim. Unfortunately, next to nothing is known of the rhetorical training some meturgemanim must have had. But one often misunderstood passage ascribed to R. Yehuda bar Ilai

⁶⁸ Gen. R. 70.16 and TanB. ויצא 20 are discussed more fully below, section 8.7.

⁶⁹ See p. 119 above.

⁷⁰ Smelik, Targum of Judges, pp. 414–29.

⁷¹ M.S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

sheds some light on the turgeman's oral-performative practice.⁷² The text of t. Meg. 3.41 according to MS Vienna reads:

- כתב הנכתב ליחיד מכלל רבים מכלל ר' יהודה אומ'
 המתרגם פסוק כצורתו הרי זה בדי והמוסיף הרי זה מגדף תרגמן העומד לפני חכם
 אינו רשאי (לפדות) לא לפחות ולא להוסיף ולא לשנות אלא אם היה אביו או רבו
 [1] Something written in the singular they modify⁷³ into the plural; [some-
 thing written] in the plural they modify into the singular.
 [2] Says R. Yehuda, 'Anyone who translates a verse plainly⁷⁴ is a liar; who adds
 something is a reviler'.
 [3] An interpreter who stands before a sage is neither permitted to leave
 anything out nor to add anything or to change anything, except if [the
 interpreter] is his father or his master.

This *baraita* brings together statements about the public rendition of a sage's speech by his turgeman and the public translation of Scripture, in keeping with the general lack of distinction between the two functions of amplifying the master and rendering Scripture. The last statement [3] refers to the interpreter of a sage while [2] and perhaps [1] refers to the bible translator who delivered his interpretation in public.⁷⁵ The restrictions imposed on the *meturgeman* as an *amora* [3] are couched in terms of a *topos* on translation which should have no additions, omissions, or any changes whatsoever.⁷⁶ Ultimately, the maxim applies to religious legislation and other genres of ancient near eastern literature,⁷⁷ which was extended to translations, biblical traditions and the *halakha*.⁷⁸ Philo

⁷²B. Visotzky wearily sighed that we have too many interpretations of this *baraita*; see his 'Saturday Morning Live; New Studies on Aramaic Renditions of the Torah', *Prooftexts* 14.1 (1994), pp. 88–94. Indeed, since the *baraita* is hard to project against its historical background, it has triggered a wide variety of interpretations, none of which are verifiable.

⁷³This translation deviates from those most commonly given; see below.

⁷⁴For the meaning of *כצורתו*, lit. 'according to its form', i.e. plainly, but usually understood as 'literally', see *Midr. Exod. (Buber)* 34 (27), 'Since everyone who expounds a verse plainly without Midrash and without the Thirteen Rules with which the Tora is expounded, to him applies what Scripture says, "The fool walks in darkness" (Qoh. 2.14)'.

⁷⁵In the first statement [1] the word *כתב* 'writ' presumably refers to a biblical text (Rabbenu Hananel reads *הכתוב* in b. Meg. 25a); note that [2] uses *פסוק*.

⁷⁶[3] is also quoted in y. Meg. 4.10(9), 75c, followed by a tradition about R. Pedat, the *amora* of R. Yassa, in a different version: 'An interpreter who stands before a sage is not permitted to change, modify (*לכנות*), or add anything...'

⁷⁷M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 262 n. 3. In Jewish sources: Deut. 4.2; 13.1 (12.32); 17.11; Jer. 26.2; Qoh. 3.14; Sir.

draws on the same topos in his description of how the translators of the Septuagint worked ‘without taking away, adding, or altering anything’.⁷⁹ He used this maxim to defend the expository type of translation which the Septuagint represents, rather than a slavishly literal translation. Even though the translators set out to preserve the ‘original form and shape’ of the Biblical text in his view, while text and translation became ‘one and the same, both in matter and in words’, the decisive point is that the process of translation was guided by divine inspiration.⁸⁰ Literal slavishness was not envisaged in this fundamental principle. In his *Antiquities*, Josephus promises not to omit or add anything to the biblical record (P. 3 [1.17]), yet his work ostentatiously does precisely that from a modern point of view⁸¹ — his understanding of staying true to the text differs from word-for-word accuracy.

The first statement allows us a glimpse of the rhetorical training of the turgemanim in the version of the *baraita* I translated. This translation is not the usual one; the commonly accepted rendition of the *baraita* follows a single text, the Lon445 manuscript, which contains the word ‘not’ twice:

A verse which is written in the singular they do not present in the plural; and one which is written in the plural they do not present in the singular [my emphasis].⁸²

By contrast, MS Vienna has neither instance of *אין* whereas MS Erfurt and the *editio princeps* only contain the second one.⁸³ This particle is not known to have a ‘double duty’, and even if it had, it is most unlikely to have one with leftward gapping (i.e. no negation in the first clause, with

18.5-6; Ep. Arist. 311; Philo, Vit. Mos. 2.34; Josephus, Ant. P. 3 (1.17); 10.10.6 (218); Apion 1.8.42; TgJon 1 Sam. 15.23; b. Meg. 14a; 21a; b. Pes. 47a; b. Eruv. 13a; b. R. Hash. 28b; b. Sot. 20a.

⁷⁸ See W.C. van Unnik, ‘De la règle Μητε προσεῖναι μήτε ἀφελεῖν dans l’histoire du canon’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 (1949), pp. 1-36; E. van Staaldoune-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel* (SAIS, 1; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), p. 331.

⁷⁹ In the translation of F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, *Philo*, II (London: Heinemann, 1929), p. 234.

⁸⁰ See Brock, ‘To Revise or Not to Revise’, p. 320. Indeed the Septuagint has been praised for certain of its deviations from the original; see Veltri, *Eine Tora*.

⁸¹ On Josephus’ approach, see esp. Inowlocki, ‘Neither Adding nor Omitting’.

⁸² For this translation, see J. Neusner, *The Tosefta* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), p. 653.

⁸³ Lieberman, *סדר מועד*, תוספתא: כפשוטה, p. 364; Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, v, p. 1221.

the negation in the second clause supposedly covering for the first).⁸⁴ The reading with one negation therefore makes little sense. The reading with two negations in MS Lon445 is traditionally preferred probably because it rings true: we expect a rabbinic trope on translation to say that nothing should be changed.⁸⁵ But the anomaly of the single negation suggests a marginal gloss that stole into the base text, in two MSS at one position, and only once at both positions. Dropping the negation twice is a far more unlikely scribal error than its insertion by puzzled scribes and glossators who expected 'translation' to be under tight control.

The absence of negations is likely to be original for two other reasons. It is an established targumic translation strategy to avoid disparity in number.⁸⁶ In the extant Targums this strategy appears to have been applied without consistency, but modifications of singulars into plurals and vice versa are attested frequently enough to call rabbinic opposition to this phenomenon into question. Moreover, contemporary rhetorical practice shows that transformation of singular into plural and vice versa were among the very basic oral transformations of written traditions.⁸⁷ Rhetoricians were trained in adapting the number of phrases. Against this background it makes perfect sense to start this short series of sayings with common rhetorical practice, since the passage as a whole reflects the practice of public speaking.

One reason to prefer both negations is the apparent contradiction between [1] (without negations) and [3], which includes the prohibition against changing anything.⁸⁸ But the prohibition of any change relates to

⁸⁴For double duty verbs, see M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), pp. 122–27, 401–404.

⁸⁵Lieberman points out that the version with two negations is supported by the Rishonim, but that hardly comes as a surprise; the reading without negations is the *lectio difficilior* much less likely to be a correction in contrast to the reading with negations. Since the rule *lectio difficilior praevallet* can easily be plied according to prejudice, it should be qualified; see B. Albrektson, 'Difficilior Lectio Probabilior—A Rule of Textual Criticism and Its Use in OT Studies', *OTS* 21 (1981), pp. 5–18; E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992), pp. 302–305.

⁸⁶Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, p. 53.

⁸⁷For the *chreia*, see M. Jaffee, 'The Oral-Cultural Context of the Talmud Yerushalmi: Greco-Roman Rhetorical Paideia, Discipleship, and the Concept of Oral Torah', in Y. Elman and I. Gershoni (eds.), *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 27–73 (31–37).

⁸⁸See Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, v, pp. 1221–22.

meaning, not to the exact wording.⁸⁹ In fact, t. Meg. 3.39-40 provides some examples of required and approved euphemisms. The examples given in the Tosefta are instances of *ketiv/qere*, ranging from 848 to 1566 instances, which went on to become a standard feature in the manuscripts.⁹⁰ What is interesting here is that the euphemisms are compulsory (even though the written text is left as it is): some changes do not count as such in expository translation. As Rabbenu Ḥananel wrote (b. Meg. 25b): 'whoever renders the Name plainly is a liar, and who adds to it, except our Targum, is a reviler' (my emphasis).⁹¹ The classic example of a challenged modification is to use a euphemism in the pericope of forbidden sexual relationships, בערייתא דאבוי ובערייתא (m. Meg. 4.9), which is interpreted as 'the shame of his father and the shame of his mother' (Lev. 18.7; see y. Meg. 4.10[9], 75c).⁹² The context refers to speaking in public (הדא דאת אמר בציבור),⁹³ as the resulting action (משתקים) implies. But despite the public context and the use of the same verb, the euphemism cannot be used to explain the *baraita*, because it represents a change from second to third person singular, not in number. Nor does the Tosefta restrict itself to the euphemisms of incestual relationships.

The overlapping use of a *topos* on translation for an interpreter and a public orator is possible for two reasons. Both functions could be combined by one person, as R. Yoḥanan's *turgeman* exemplifies. But more specifically, both functions require fidelity in the ancient understanding of the concept, which involved the 'power' of the original text rather than an accurate representation of its lexemes.⁹⁴ A similar overlapping use is evident in b. Yom. 48a, where the letters of a Biblical clause are rearranged

⁸⁹The translation of the verse, 'And they saw the God of Israel' is a point in case (Tosafot Qid. 49a, quoting Rabbenu Ḥananel). Here both a literal translation and an unwarranted supplementation, 'And they saw the angel of God', are out of court. The correct translation is, 'And they saw the glory of Israel'.

⁹⁰See Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 58-63.

⁹¹The reference to 'our Targum' is derived from b. Qid. 49a. The Tosafot claim that the Targum was given at Sinai (Tos. Qid. 49a) on the basis of b. Meg. 3a.

⁹²A. Shinan, המכנה בעריות משתקין אותו, *Sinai* 79 (1975-1976), pp. 171-77; Shinan, אגדתם של מתורגמנים, pp. 197-202.

⁹³Applied to one who says 'We give thanks, we give thanks', but equally valid for the first two examples in m. Meg. 4.9; cf. Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, v, pp. 1221-22. See also b. Meg. 25a.

⁹⁴Inowlocki, 'Neither Adding Nor Omitting'; cf. Brock, 'Aspects of Translation Technique'.

to bring out a specific halakhic meaning and resolve a halakhic difficulty: שמע מינה מאי מדם הפר דם מהפר יקבלנו וקסבר גורעין ומוסיפין ודורשין 'Infer from this, What is 'From the blood of the bullock'?—'The blood from the bullock'. One may remove [a letter] and add [one] and [thus] interpret'.⁹⁵ The reason for this syntactic interpretation, moving the preposition מן from one word to another, is a perceived contradiction between Lev. 4.5 and 4.7. Thus the intended meaning is deemed to have been brought out. The rabbis only condone such moves because midrashic interpretation leaves the original text as is but brings out part of its meaning in its meta-text.

4.4 לשון 'to write a translation' (ב) לכתוב

The expressions להשיא את הכתב (ב) לשון and לכתוב (ב) לשון concern the written process of translation: 'write in the language (of X)', 'transcribe in the language (of X)'.

The expression לכתוב (ב) לשון occurs in the rabbinic version of the legend of the Septuagint, specifically as regards the Tora which was written on behalf of King Talmi. These narratives focus on the composition and written nature of the translation. The expression also occurs in connection with the Tora written in seventy languages on the stones which Israel were to set up after crossing the Jordan.⁹⁶ And finally, it occurs with or without לשון, 'writing' the Tora in another language in connection with the permissibility to produce, or use, written translations.⁹⁷ In t. Sot. 8.6 and y. Sot. 7.5, 21d the transcription/copy of the Tora into seventy languages is expressed as ... בשבעים לשון והשיאו את הכתב.⁹⁸ In each instance, the focus is explicitly on written copies rather than oral-performative translations.

The difference between לכתוב (ב) לשון on the one hand and the lexemes sharing the root תרגם on the other is one of vantage point. In each of the former instances the focus is on the writing as publication, but ultimately these texts were to be recited too, since written texts were meant to be read out aloud. The oral character of a public rendition does not exclude a written carrier of the text, but the written medium and

⁹⁵ See Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, II, p. 35; Van Unnik, 'De la règle', p. 22.

⁹⁶ m. Sot. 7.5; y. Sot. 7.5, 21d; Mek. Deut. (Schechter, *מכילתא לדברים*, p. 187); SOR II.

⁹⁷ m. Meg. 1.8; b. Meg. 8b–9b; y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c; y. Shab. 16.1, 15b–c; Deut. R. 1.1; Sef. T. 1.6; Sof. 1.7–8; 1.10.

⁹⁸ For these passages, see Ch. One, section 1.3 (p. 29) above.

oral rendition usually existed side by side. Wherever an oral tradition required painstaking precision and intricate structural composition, its composition would have involved written composition in tandem with oral-performative techniques. Eventually the difference would assume greater significance when orality became 'an ideologically charged strategy of transmission' (see Chapter Six).⁹⁹

4.5 Conclusion

The oral-performative practice informed rabbinic terminology. All the lexemes which share the root *תרגם* are intrinsically connected with the public rendering of a text. They revolve around an interpretative declamation such as the oral-performative translation in the synagogue, the mediatory translation in the court of law, public proclamations, the public address of a rabbi's spokesman, or the rabbi's interpretative statement. As the medium, act or agent of a declamatory rendition they carry the connotation of orality inherent in the public rendering of a text projected by a voice.

The translations varied by context, ranging from scriptural translations in the synagogue, intermediary interpretations in legal situations, to hermeneutic resolutions and transcultural interpretations. In the Babylonian sources in particular, the verb developed into a term for halakhic interpretations and resolutions for which Palestinian sources, as the Bavli makes explicit, use the verb *אמר*. The terminological difference is remarkable in view of the shared views between Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis. That the targum may on occasion or on location have been recited from a manuscript does not detract from the fact that interpreting from memory became the norm. Even so, we should not read too much into the terminology. In spite of the distinction between oral and written sources in liturgical practice, the performance blurs the boundaries since all written texts were normally disseminated by public declamation. However, when the aspect of orality became ideologized, the distinction may have pressed itself on the Palestinian rabbis who knew of or possessed written translations and as a result the Palestinian sources were unable to overlook the written transmission of scriptural translations. They refrained from

⁹⁹Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, 'Transmitting Tradition: Orality and Textuality in Jewish Cultures', in Y. Elman and I. Gershoni (eds.), *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 4-13 (13).

extending the use of תרגום and its derivatives to the rabbinic interpretative activity. On the rare occasions on which they did, they either refer to a Babylonian tale or, interestingly enough, to non-rabbinic preachers, which shows they were, in fact, familiar with a wider semantic range of the lexemes involved but chose to select alternative terms for their own hermeneutic activity. The insistence upon the oral character of the translation prompts a number of questions. Was there a sustained disapproval of written translations for all purposes, or just for the purpose of liturgical recitation? Was there a sustained oral transmission, which would allow the suppression of written versions, and did the rabbis bestow greater esteem on the orally received text than on written versions? These questions will be explored in the following chapters, which focus on the liturgical practices and regulations (Chapter Five), the position of translation between Holy Writ and Oral Tora (Chapter Six), and finally the ensnarement of the written scriptural translations (Chapter Seven).

Chanting the Scriptures

Among the variables which define a text, context takes pride of place: what a text means to whom and where. No context is constant, stable, or unchallenged, but proper attention to the iteration of a text in extratextual conditions tells us something about that text;¹ not so much about the established context for proper interpretation, but about the multiple contexts of textual instantiation.

If there ever was a range and variety of possible contextualizations for reading the Scriptures, rabbinic literature does not divulge the details to us. Although it is only to be expected that differences of context may have informed the way the Bible was read by Jewish communities in Palestine and the Diaspora, rabbinic literature describes the public recitation of the written Tora as a unitary and consistent practice with little room for variation. The public reading of the Tora and portions of the Prophets should be accompanied by an oral-performative translation, verse by verse, so that each Hebrew verse would be followed by an Aramaic version.² The resultant bilingual, antiphonal text is commonly regarded as the norm in the Palestinian synagogues of Late Antiquity.

But in Late Antique Palestine the context of public reading was far from uniform: the coastal area and the Hellenistic cities, Jerusalem, Idumea, the (Lower and Upper) Galilee and the Golan did not share the same conditions and history,³ and these areas, let alone the various regions of the Western Diaspora, were probably not consistent in the degree to which they conformed to the legal decisions of rabbinic leaders.⁴ In the words

¹ Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, p. 105. Cf. E.A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 130–55.

² Berliner, *Targum Onkelos*, pp. 84–88; Alexander, 'Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules', pp. 14–28; Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', pp. 253–86.

³ M. Smith, 'Palestinian Judaism in the First Century', in M. Davis (ed.), *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 81.

⁴ Goodman, *State and Society*, pp. 93–118; S.J.D. Cohen, 'The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century', in Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, pp. 157–73; Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, pp. 66–74.

of Williams: 'Literary sources both Jewish and Graeco-Roman tend to give the impression that Judaism in classical antiquity was homogeneous. Inscriptions give the lie to that.'⁵ Despite the considerable difficulty in interpreting the evidence, which has given rise to opposing views of variety and uniformity in Late Antique Judaism,⁶ the odds are that Judaism in the Mediterranean area has been varied to an extent the rabbinic sources do not betray. Neither was the linguistic context of Mediterranean and Eastern Judaism uniform, as already observed above (Chapter Three). Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew were used in different combinations, dialects and registers, and with different levels of competence. On the basis of papyri, inscriptions, literature, coins, and the dissemination of imperial decrees in Greek, it seems safe to assume that Greek had established itself as a *lingua franca* throughout the area and as the vernacular of part of its Jewish population.

Context is elusive in the reading practices of Late Antique synagogues. Our evidence is sparse and circumstantial, metatextual reflections are few and far between. Yet it is still worthwhile to probe the rabbinic sources for glimpses of public recitation in a form which was not restricted to the Hebrew/Aramaic variety prescribed in rabbinic literature. The contextual aspect of public reading, which concerns both the languages and the norms adopted by the Jewish communities of Late Antiquity, remains largely unexplored. Notwithstanding scholarly attention to the *Sitz im Leben* of the Targum in the synagogue, we should explore the question whether the rabbinic rules about the public recitation of the Tora presuppose an already regularized situation, or whether they are intended to promote and impose such conditions. The following analysis will proceed from a description of the rabbinic format of oral-performative translation to alternative, less well-defined and attested formats, to finally evaluate the rabbinic restrictions on public reading and oral-performative translation of selected pericopes.

⁵M. Williams, 'The Contribution of Jewish Inscriptions to the Study of Judaism', in W. Horbury, W.D. Davies and J. Sturdy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, III, *The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 75–93 (93).

⁶M. Goodman, 'Jews and Judaism in the Mediterranean Diaspora in the Late-Roman Period: The Limitations of Evidence', in C. Bakhos (ed.), *Ancient Judaism in its Hellenistic Context* (JSJSup, 95; Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 177–203.

5.1 Targum as *miqra*'s antiphon

The vast majority of rabbinic references to the context of translation relate to the synagogue service, where the distinction between the Hebrew original and its oral-performative translation was to be zealously maintained. The translation was at once kept at bay and tied into its Hebrew source, distinguished from, yet inextricably bound to, the Tora and Prophets.

In the binding format of bilingual recitation the source (*miqra*) and target text (*targum*) were assigned to two different persons, the reader (קורא) and interpreter (מתרגם).⁷ The two separate functions highlight the distinction between Tora and translation. They would alternate their recitation by one verse in the Tora and three verses in the portion of the Prophets,⁸ waiting for the other to take over, each verse first chanted by the reader, then by the interpreter,⁹ pitching the volume of their melodious chant at like level.¹⁰ No text should be skipped in the Tora, while skipping in the text of the Prophets was only allowed as long as no interval between reader and interpreter occurred as a result: hence scrolling should not take longer as the translation of a single verse.¹¹ The two voices would alternate with one another in an orderly fashion, not interrupting one another, and seamlessly continuing each other's recitation, thus creating a text in two languages and, possibly, two different melodies pitched at a similar level.¹²

Scripture would be chanted as was customary in antiquity, because melodies facilitate memorization and help project the voice. We have no contemporary witnesses giving evidence of chanting Scripture, but the tradition of musical accentuation already existed in the Talmudic period.¹³ A monotonous delivery of the translation would have interrupted the cantillation of the Tora, which alternated with the oral-performative trans-

⁷ *Miqra* denotes 'recited Scripture'. See t. B. Meṣ. 2.2f; y. Pea 2.6, 17a; y. Meg. 4.1, 74d; b. Meg. 32a; b. Sot. 39b; Pes. R. 5.1; Tan. וירא 5; כי תשא 34; TanB. לך לך 6; cf. b. Git. 60b.

⁸ m. Meg. 4.4; b. Meg. 23b–24a; b. Sot. 41a; b. Yom. 69b; Sof. 11.1.

⁹ b. Sot. 39b. Munḡ's first hand reads: ואין המתרג' רשא להתחיל בפסוק אחר בתרגום, but the plus בפסוק אחר is a dittography, marked for deletion.

¹⁰ b. Ber. 45a.

¹¹ b. Meg. 23b–24a; b. Sot. 41a; b. Yom. 69b. However, y. Meg. 4.4, 75b does not mention the Targum in this connection.

¹² The Yemenite practice of oral translation employs a different melody for the Targum than for the Tora; whether this reflects ancient practice, cannot be determined.

¹³ See y. Meg. 4.1, 74d; b. Ned. 37b; b. Meg. 3a; Gen. R. 36.8; A. Dotan, 'The Relative Chronology of Hebrew Vocalization and Accentuation', PAAJR 48 (1981), pp. 87–99.

lation. Targumic cantillation is indicated by the presence of cantillation signs in some targumic manuscripts, both in the Babylonian fragments and in manuscripts provided with Tiberian vocalization, including one fragment of the Palestinian Targum to Genesis.¹⁴ Such manuscripts would not normally have been permitted for use in the synagogue service but would still have been of great help for rehearsing targumists, since the signs mark and conserve sense units, shadowing the ancient practice of delimitation in the Hebrew source text, apart from their musical application in public performance or private study. The practice of chanting the translation may be confirmed by a rebuke of the מתורגמנים, 'interpreters', שגביהין קולם בשיר להשמיע את העם 'who raise their voices in a song to help the people hear'.¹⁵ Since these interpreters are unfavourably contrasted with the דרשנים 'expositors', they probably do not refer to the mouthpieces of a sage, but they might reflect the disparaged practice of popular lay preachers rather than synagogue interpreters.¹⁶ Either way, the reproof confirms the practice of chanting to project a voice and facilitate aural reception.

Despite the unified impression of such a 'counterpointal' recitation,¹⁷ the texts were not of equal standing, nor were their reciters. The lowest threshold is reserved for the translation: a minor, a blind person, and one dressed in ragged clothes may perform the translation. The Tora, on the

¹⁴See, for manuscript examples, MS Ebr. 448 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome; Kennicott 233); MS hébreu 18 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris); MS Or. Fol. 1-4 (Berlin); MS 1 (Biblioteca Antigua, Salamanca); MS Villa-Amil n. 6 (Complutensian Library, Madrid); MS T-S Misc. 27.1.4 (Cambridge Genizah Collections), plate 9 in M.L. Klein, *Targumic Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); see further MSS T-S B6.13, T-S B6.24, T-S B15.4, T-S Misc. 27.1.4, T-S 20.155 (=AS 63.24, 117, 129; AS 69.241) (Cambridge Genizah Collections), plates 3, 5, 7, 8. Among the editions, T117 has full accents for the Targum. For the Babylonian fragments, cf. E. Martínez Borobio, *Targum Jonatán de los Profetas Primeros en Tradición Babilónica*, vol. 1: *Josué—Jueces* (TECC, 46; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1989); vol. III: 1-11 *Reyes* (TECC, 63; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998); vol. II: 1-11 *Samuel* (TECC, 43; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1987); J. Ribera Florit, *Targum Jonatán de los Profetas Posteriores en Tradición Babilónica: Jeremías* (TECC, 52; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992).

¹⁵Qoh. R. 7.5; cf. Qoh. R. 9.17. See Shinar, *מקרא אחד*, p. 25; M. Bregman, 'The Darshan: Preacher and Teacher of Talmudic Times', *Melton Journal* 14 (1982), pp. 3, 19, 26.

¹⁶See section 4.2, esp. p. 147.

¹⁷See Fraade's precise description in 'Rabbinic Views', p. 257.

other hand, may not be recited by either a blind person (who cannot read) or an improperly dressed male (who might embarrass the community).¹⁸ The interpreter should not be senior to the reader, but the reverse situation is allowed so as to avoid any impression of equality between source and target text.¹⁹ To add further emphasis, the Hebrew had to be read from the written text, in an unpointed scroll, without glancing aside, whereas the interpreter delivered his translation by heart²⁰ without any recourse to a written version during the service, highlighting its oral properties in contrast to the Holy Writ.²¹ Within Scripture, another hierarchy becomes visible in the number of people who might simultaneously read and interpret, with a declining scale of importance from Tora with two voices (one reader, one interpreter), the Prophets with three voices (one reader, two interpreters), down to the Megilla where almost anything goes with four to ten voices as it is so popular 'so people will pay attention (anyway)'.²² Exactly how such simultaneous interpretations should be envisaged—whether it involved alternation or not, and standing next to the reader or not, remains unclear, but chances are that the numbers are symbolic rather than realistic. There is a twofold hierarchy of source and target text: the Tora ranks at the top, the Megilla at the bottom,²³ while the translation of the Tora is also regulated slightly more strictly than that of the Prophets or the Megilla. The motives for this format betray a sensitivity regarding the status of translations. Perhaps more than with any other genre, the rabbis felt a need to distinguish between the Tora and its translation(s): דאמר עולא: מפני מה אמרו הקורא בתורה לא יסייע למתורגמן כדי שלא יאמרו תרגום כתוב

¹⁸ m. Meg. 4.6; t. Meg. 3.21, 27–28, 30; y. Meg. 4.7(6), 75b; b. Meg. 24a; Tan. תולדות 7; Sof. 14.12.

¹⁹ t. Meg. 3.21; Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים*, pp. 5–6. For the comparison with Moses and Aaron, and their relative status, see above, p. 161. That the meturgeman had to be fifty years old, as b. Hag. 14b stipulates, almost certainly pertains to the spokesman of a sage.

²⁰ For references to boys reciting the Targum by heart, see S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Genizah*, II, The Community (6 vols.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 158, 175, 177.

²¹ Pes. R. 5; y. Meg. 4.1, 74d; Tan. וירא 5; TanB. לך לך 6; Tan. כי תשא 34. Cf. y. Pea 2.6, 17a; b. Tem. 14b.

²² t. Meg. 3.20; y. Ber. 5.3, 9c (par. y. Meg. 4.1, 74d); b. Meg. 21b; b. R. Hash. 27a. Cf. R. Hananel Meg. 21a. The Mishna remains silent on this topic (m. Meg. 4.1, 4).

²³ But see I. Gottlieb, 'The Extremes of Esther and Its Implications for Midrash', in Teugels and Ulmer (eds.), *Interpretation, Religion and Culture*, pp. 51–67. For Esther as entertainment, see A. Kovelman, 'Farce in the Talmud', *RRJ* 5 (2002), pp. 86–92.

הקורא בתורה 'For Ulla said: Why do they say that the one who reads from the Tora should not assist the interpreter? So that they should not say that the Targum is written in the Tora.'²⁴

All this by and large reflects the rabbinic legal representations of translational practices over the course of several centuries, but how accurately these prescriptions reflect reality is a moot point. The foremost value of these traditions for the history of rabbinic views on language and translation consists of their ideological concerns and their reception history, for they would eventually define liturgical practice. The vestiges of this bilingual yet hierarchically layered custom are indeed discernible in manuscript formats, translational structure and stemmatological contamination of manuscript evidence.²⁵ However, the manuscript evidence is distinctly later and cannot be relied upon as evidence for practices during the classical rabbinic period. Such caution is necessary, but not universally practised in this connection. In his study of the evidence for the establishment of reading the Tora in public, Schiffman claims that the 'Torah and the Prophets were already translated into Aramaic in tannaitic times, even in the earliest strata of our texts'.²⁶ As the main evidence for these 'earliest strata' he cites m. Meg. 4.4:

הקורא בתורה לא יפחות משלשה פסוקים לא יקרא לתורגמן יתר מפסוק אחד ובגביא שלשה היו שלשתן שלש פרשן [יות קורים אחד אחד מדלגים בגביא ואין מדלגים בתורה ועד כמה הוא מדלג עד כדי שלא יפסיק התורגמן

Who recites the Tora should read no fewer than three verses. He may not read to the interpreter more than a single verse and, in the case of the portion of the Prophets, three [verses]. If the three of them constitute three distinct paragraphs, they read them one by one. They skip [from place to place] in the

²⁴b. Meg. 32a; par. Pes. R. 5.1; Tan. וירא 5.

²⁵For a more detailed examination of format, notations, texture and contamination, see W.F. Smelik, 'Orality, Manuscript Reproduction, and the Targums', in A. den Hollander, U. Schmidt and W.F. Smelik (eds.), *Paratext and Megatext in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (JCP; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003), pp. 49–81 (71–80).

²⁶L.H. Schiffman, 'The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah', in S. Fine (ed.), *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 44–56 (53–54). See also L.I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 593; G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (eds.), E.M. Schürer: *The History of the Jewish people in the Age of Jesus Christ (174 BC–AD 135)* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–87), II, pp. 452–53; B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (repr. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 68.

Prophets but not in the Tora. And how far may one skip? [Only] so much that the interpreter will not pause [during the rolling of the scroll].

To Schiffman this 'passage shows that translation was the norm', whereby the translation in question is into Aramaic. Such uncritical positivism invites scrutiny: is it possible to project the regularized, prescribed practice into the early Tannaitic period? In contrast to Schiffman's claim, it is highly disputable whether this mishna is part of the 'earliest strata' of the Mishna, for the regularization of scriptural translation seems to have been achieved in the Usha-period.²⁷ Even if this mishna were to reflect older practices, there is ample reason to doubt that the representation of what should be done is an accurate portrayal of what was done. References to actual practice reveal a reality different from the halakhic norm(s) up to the fourth century CE. The Yerushalmi relates of a third generation Palestinian amora who saw, on separate occasions, someone who combined the functions of reciting the Hebrew and translating, and someone who used a written text for the translation.²⁸ Nor do the Palestinian Targums always follow contemporary rabbinic rulings.²⁹ Current research tilts toward an ever more sceptical appreciation of actual rabbinic influence on Jews and Judaism during the Tannaitic period and reckons with a far more gradual and slow emergence of the rabbinic movement.³⁰ While it has long been assumed that the Aramaic Bible translation had been introduced into the synagogue service by the first century CE, there is no evidence for this assumption until the mid-second century of the common era.³¹ Hence, the selective, formative aspects of the rabbinic portrayal of translation requires attention. Does the 'ideal' bilingual reading practice obscure reflections on other contemporaneous practices?

All the Mishna proves is that the Tannaim regularized the practice in the Usha-period, but not when and where individual communities employed translations in their services, not even whether the directive was

²⁷Z. Safrai, 'The Origins of Reading the Aramaic Targum in Synagogue', *Immanuel* 24/25 (1990), pp. 187–93 (189); Safrai, 'The Targums as Part of Rabbinic Literature', p. 246.

²⁸y. Meg. 4.1, 74d; see York, 'The Targum in the Synagogue'. The same tractate mentions a translation not deemed acceptable, which has been preserved in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan; see below, pp. 416–18.

²⁹J. Heinemann, 'Early Halakhah in the Palestinian Targumim', *JJS* 25 (1974), pp. 114–22.

³⁰See, e.g., Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*; Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

³¹L.L. Grabbe, 'Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Re-Assessment', *JTS* 39 (1989), pp. 401–10; Safrai, 'The Origins of Reading', pp. 187–93; Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, pp. 31–39.

generally followed up in their own times. What is required is independent corroboration of the bilingual reading practice, together with a far more rigorous attention to 'textual resistance' to the accepted construction of history than has been offered in the past. Dissonant voices have too often been re-aligned, or marginalized, if not drowned out by the eventually emerging dominant opinion.

There are several passages that, juxtaposed to m. Meg. 4.4, undermine its deceptively uniform 'testimony'. The Toseftan counterpart to tractate Megilla adds several details to the discussion of public reading, including 3.13:

בית הכנסת של לעווזת אם יש להן מי שיקרא עברית פותחין עברית וחותרין עברית
אם אין להן מי שיקרא אלא אחד אין קורא אלא אחד

As for a synagogue of those who speak a foreign language (לעווזת), if they have someone who can read in Hebrew they begin in Hebrew and conclude in Hebrew. If they have only one who can read [in Greek],³² only one reads.

The last stipulation does not specify the language of recitation, but must concern Greek, since a single person capable of reading Hebrew, who has to stand and sit down seven times because of the blessings, has already been discussed (3.12). Tellingly, the Tosefta implies, but does not say explicitly, that in between the Hebrew opening and ending the bulk is read in translation. While the language is not specified, it presumably refers to Greek speaking communities (לעוי usually does).³³ This was not a situation which the rabbis deemed felicitous, but one which simply existed. The very wording 'If there is someone who can read Hebrew' suggests that even this may not be the case. If no Hebrew speaker is available, we must assume that everything is read in translation. Lieberman points out that the insistence on a Hebrew beginning and ending is related to the blessings,³⁴ but by the same token the insistence on a Hebrew framework signals the priority of the Hebrew text. Communities without any literate Hebrew speaker would presumably have to make do without the blessings, as their reader(s) are not required to stand up and sit down.

Like the Mishna, the Tosefta 'expects' a translation to accompany the public recitation of the Tora (e.g. t. Meg. 3.20-21), but it refers to situations in which no Hebrew can be used; the Mishna passes over such possibilities

³² Cf. n. 35 below. For the Tosefta, see Lieberman, תוספתא כפשוטה, v, p. 1179.

³³ But see p. 34 n. 77 above.

³⁴ Cf. Lieberman, תוספתא: סדר מועד, p. 356. Cf. m. Meg. 4.2.

in silence. The Mishna, redacted at a time when the centre of Jewish Palestine had moved to the Aramaic heartland, Galilee, obliterates the custom of reading in Greek which would have been relevant to the coastal areas and certain cities including Jerusalem before the Second Revolt, and possibly in some locations even thereafter. Yet the Tosefta does not stand alone. Discussing the number of people who read on several occasions, the Yerushalmi relates (y. Meg. 4.3, 75a):

הלעוזות לא נהגו כן אלא אחד קורא כל הפרשה כולה

Those who speak a foreign language [Greek] do not follow this custom; rather, one reads the whole *parasha*.

Philo confirms this 'foreign' custom as he claims that each shabbat, in the synagogue, 'some priest who is present, or some one of the elders, reads the sacred laws to them'.³⁵ Sadly, his summary description fails to specify either location or language, but confirms recitation by a single reader followed by an exposition (καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον ἐξηγεῖται) without any mention of a translation. In which language Scripture was recited thus remains speculative, but it is fair to assume Greek for Egypt and Asia Minor. Illiterate alloglots would not have followed a long, literary text recited in a language that was not their vernacular at a time when Hebrew was not yet exclusively required. Following the Tosefta, it seems unlikely that they read the bulk of the text in a language no one was able to understand.

That some would read the Tora in Greek, even in Palestine, is not unexpected from a halakhic perspective. According to the majority opinion in m. Meg. 1.8 biblical scrolls deemed fit for liturgical use may be written in any language, while R. Shimon ben Gamaliel only allows Greek. It often goes overlooked that the majority opinion apparently considers written translations as halakhically valid at the beginning of the Amoraic period.³⁶ In silencing this option, which would have been the obvious preference of foreign language speakers, m. Meg. 4.4 takes a stand which should not be construed as the only historically plausible situation. The mishna is 'the norm' insofar as the Mishna prioritizes the bilingual recitation, but even the Mishna itself acknowledges alternative practices in m. Meg. 1.8 (and m. Shab. 16.1), the validity of which is explicitly recognized in the Tosefta and Yerushalmi.

³⁵Quoted in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, viii 7,13 (τῶν ἱερέων δέ τις ὁ παρὼν ἢ τῶν γερόντων εἰς ἀναγινώσκει τοὺς ἱεροὺς νόμους αὐτοῖς).

³⁶Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 119–20, 146–51, bypasses the relevance of the majority opinion.

Equally selective is the bilingual practice *m. Meg.* 4.4 projects, for it would be wrong to assume that an instantaneous translation took place at all times. Translation always remained optional, despite the likelihood of a public demand for scriptural translation. Rooted in the biblical proof-text of *Neh.* 8.8 as the institution of translation may be (מניין לתרגום), according to Palestinian and Babylonian sources, it was not to be considered indispensable.³⁷ People were not always available to perform the oral translation,³⁸ in which case the absence of a translation did not invalidate the reading.³⁹ Even in the late Amoraic period not every community may have been gifted with a person capable of translation into Aramaic.⁴⁰ Whether such synagogues were served by itinerant translators, such as we know of *darshanim*, is unknown. One may speculate that rabbinic vetting of both interpreter and interpretation had something to do with this situation. Although optional, the oral-performative translation was taken seriously enough to demand instantaneous correction of any perceived errors.⁴¹ To perform an appropriate oral interpretation, as *R. Yehuda bar Ilai* articulated in his famous saying on translation, is no mean feat.⁴² A chanted tradition implies a well-established, traditional text, although this assumption may not have applied to established performers who knew how to subdivide their verses and vary the tradition according to the occasion. Still, it would be wrong to believe that the text was entirely fluid or an oral-performative improvisation: the rabbis still sought to control the wording of the interpretation, and it is reasonable to assume that the translational choices were compulsory to a large extent. The extent of the control that is exercised over translation—concerning its contents, context and performance, whether real or virtually—points to a fear for improper influence, whether by status or content of the translations.

To some extent, practical reasons thus account for the optional character of translation, yet they are not decisive: the insistence on the use of Hebrew would always imply the optional character of translations. In *m. Meg.* 2.1 translations are granted but do not fulfil the obligation to read

³⁷ *Gen. R.* 36.8; *b. Ned.* 37b; *b. Meg.* 3a; *y. Meg.* 4.1, 74d; cf. *y. Bik.* 3.8(5), 65d.

³⁸ *y. Meg.* 4.3, 75a; *b. Meg.* 23a–b.

³⁹ *y. Meg.* 4.1, 74d; cf. *m. Meg.* 2.1.

⁴⁰ *b. Meg.* 23b, 'It is different in a place where there is no interpreter'.

⁴¹ *y. Meg.* 4.1, 74d; see pp. 422–24 below.

⁴² *b. Qid.* 49a; *t. Meg.* 3.41; see p. 164 above.

the text in Hebrew. Translating is an optional, gratuitous act on behalf of those who do not understand the Hebrew. The Mishna appears to silence an opposite voice that granted a more prominent place for translations for those who do not speak Hebrew. This voice can still be heard, however, in the parallel discussion in *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a and *y. Sot.* 7.1, 21b, according to which translation is not *always* optional but may fulfil the obligation to read the text under discussion. In Sota, the relevant discussion about the Shema proceeds to the similar case of reading the Scroll of Esther (*y. Sot.* 7.1, 21b), where R. Mana disagrees both with the Mishna and his peer.⁴³ In the Geonic period, ironically, the once optional character of translation has turned into an obligatory act, although the public was no longer able to understand Onqelos and Jonathan but preferred a translation into their own vernacular.⁴⁴

On the assumption that scriptural recitation included translation, the latter would not necessarily have been confined to Aramaic. The Greek translation lends itself just as convincingly for the interlocutory position the rabbis had assigned to the practice of translation. Nicholas de Lange observed that code-switching between Hebrew and Greek among Greek-speaking Jews resembles the rabbinic use of Hebrew and Aramaic to some extent.⁴⁵ A Hebrew/Greek recitation is not implausible: the one-to-one translation of Aquila, favoured by Palestinian rabbis over Aramaic, is suited to a bilingual recitation. In the words of Philip Alexander: 'The puzzling features of Aquila begin to make sense if Aquila is not seen as a free-standing translation, to be read in isolation, but as a crib to allow students to understand the Hebrew Bible'.⁴⁶ He does not go so far as to suggest a liturgical use of Aquila's translation, however. That Greek could function in a bilingual practice is attested for Scythopolis in the late third century CE, where the Christians had their Greek lectionary translated into Aramaic.⁴⁷

The Mishna does not stipulate the number of people who were to recite and interpret, but our remaining sources point out, as we have

⁴³ See p. 68 above; for *m. Meg.* 2.1 and *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a, see pp. 190–201 below.

⁴⁴ See the reproof by R. Natronai Gaon, quoted by D. Rappel, תרגום אונקלוס כפירוש (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1985), p. 24 n. 9.

⁴⁵ De Lange, 'Hebrew/Greek Manuscripts', p. 262.

⁴⁶ Alexander, 'How Did the Rabbis Learn' (cf. appendix E).

⁴⁷ See Millar, *The Roman Near East*, pp. 198–99.

seen, that the Tora should normally be read by only one person and also interpreted by one person. However, a different scenario is brought up in two unrelated sources. The Yerushalmi preserves the following *baraita*:⁴⁸

תני לא יהו שנים קורין בתורה ואחד מתרגם אמ' ר' זעורא מפני הברכה והתני לא יהו שנים מתרגמין ואחד קורא אית לך מימר מפני הברכה אלא משום שאין שני קולות כנכסין לתוך אוזן אחת תני שנים קורין בתורה ואין מפטירין בנביא אמ' ר' עולא קרויות בתורה ואין קרויות בנביא

It is taught, Two persons should not recite the Tora while [another] one interprets [t. Meg. 3.20].

R. Zeira said, Because of the blessing.

But it is [also] taught, Two persons should not interpret while one reads from the Tora [t. Meg. 3.20]. Can you [still] say [it is] because of the blessing? Rather [because] two voices cannot enter one ear [and be distinguished clearly].

It is taught, Two read in the Tora, but two may not read in the Prophets. R. Ulla said, There are [several] readings in the Tora, but not in the Prophets.

Following R. Zeira, the first clause of the *baraita* bars two persons from reading the same portion of the Tora because one may not recite the blessing twice over the same portion;⁴⁹ hence only one person can read a portion at any one time. In an anonymous objection the second clause of the *baraita* is raised as a counter-argument: just as two readers and one interpreter cannot be allowed, so, too, can one reader and two interpreters not be permitted. In the latter case, however, there only ever is to be one blessing, so that R. Zeira's argument cannot explain the first clause. Rather, it is suggested, two may not recite or interpret simultaneously because the human ear cannot distinguish between two concurrent voices.

So far so good, but the Yerushalmi proceeds with another *baraita*: 'Two read in the Tora but two may not read in the Prophets'. This ruling contradicts not only the previous *baraita* but any other ruling on the number of people allowed to read the Tora simultaneously.⁵⁰ In an apparent attempt to resolve the problem, R. Ulla holds that the final *baraita* pertains to distinct portions within the Tora, which are read by several persons, unlike the single portion of the Prophets. His solution begs the question how the *baraita* ended up here: within its current setting,

⁴⁸ y. Ber. 5.3, 9c (with a parallel in y. Meg. 4.1, 74d).

⁴⁹ As the previous discussion in y. Ber. 5.3, 9c implies (about a reader who falls silent midway his recitation).

⁵⁰ See p. 175 n. 22 above.

we would expect a statement about simultaneous recitation rather than the number of subsequent readers. Moreover, the Tora has seven distinct sections to be read, not two. Thus this *baraita* appears to have been tagged onto the previous discussion because of its similarity of formulation and topic, although it actually hails from another context. Now that we have established a different context for the last *baraita*, R. Ulla's suggestion also makes more sense. For the number 'two'—which is too specific to simply denote 'more than one'—remains odd in any context unless we assume that it refers to the Greek-speaking synagogues where only one person could read the Hebrew, who would begin and conclude the recitation, whereas the bulk of the text is read in translation by someone else; thus two people would read the Tora. On this assumption, the *baraita* applies to the previously discussed situation underlying t. Meg. 3.13.

An echo of this tradition occurs in b. R. Hash. 27a. To illuminate the distinction between the sounds of the trumpets and the shofar the *gemara* brings the analogous case of the simultaneous voices of two distinct reciters. Objecting to the notion that these voices are distinguishable, the *gemara* states: *שלא יהו שנים קורין ושנים מתרגמין* 'but not should two [persons] read while two interpret'. The suggestion is that only one person may read or interpret at any one time, because otherwise people would not distinguish between their voices—which illuminates the anonymous objection of the Yerushalmi, that two distinct voices cannot enter a single ear. This passage does not confirm the 'anomalous' tradition in the Yerushalmi, but what is interesting about it is the suggested correction in the Vilna edition: *שלא יהא אחד קורא* 'but not should one [person] read [while two interpret]', which corresponds to the standard ruling. All manuscripts support the uncorrected reading, with the exception of TS F2(2)62 which harmonizes the text with b. Meg. 21b. While the possibility of two simultaneous readers and two interpreters is doubtlessly a hypothetical exercise, the correction in the Geniza fragment and Masoret HaShas shows that even conjectural possibilities that disagree with the received tradition are suppressed during the process of textual transmission.⁵¹

⁵¹ Similarly, the Tosafot (b. Meg. 21b) suggest that Rashi erased the reference to the ten translators for the scroll of Esther, as he comments *ועשרה מתרגמין: לא גרסינן שאין תרגום בכתובים* "And ten interpret": Not in our reading because there is no Targum to the Writings'. They disagree and point out that there is in fact a Targum to the Writings.

alternate by three verses but by one, as in Targum Onqelos. Of course, these manuscripts are later than m. Meg. 4.4, hence the possibility cannot be excluded that earlier practices conformed to the Mishna's ruling. While alternation by a single verse in Onqelos has now been confirmed for the Talmudic period,⁵⁷ for the Prophets similar evidence is lacking, either by verse or by three verses.⁵⁸ But the ideal scenario of the Aramaic translation as *miqra's* carefully orchestrated antiphon belies the social realities which even the rabbinic sources themselves, no matter how sparingly, reflect.

5.2 The use of Greek Scriptures

The rabbinic preference for a bilingual recitation in Hebrew and Aramaic, if not in Hebrew only, does not detract from the impression that a monolingual Greek practice prevailed in areas where Greek speakers dominated, with the possibility of the bilingual variety of Hebrew and Greek. In the words of Momigliano, there 'were entire communities which, even though they considered themselves Jews and practised the Jewish religion, spoke Greek, thought in Greek and knew hardly any Hebrew or Aramaic'.⁵⁹ Would such communities as existed in Palestine, Egypt, Asia Minor, the Balkan and Italy have commanded Greek to the extent that they would have understood a Greek Bible translation? The answer can only be resoundingly positive.

The early rabbis did not frown upon the use of Greek to fulfil religious obligations. Thus Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel permitted the use of Greek besides Hebrew for use in the synagogue (m. Meg. 1.8), Palestinian sages advocated the use of Aquila (y. Meg. 1.11[8], 71c).⁶⁰ It stands to reason that the oral instantiation of the Tora occurred in Greek in some Palestinian synagogues, but we actually know frustratingly little about the extent and longevity of this practice, or even whether it involved

⁵⁷C. Müller-Kessler, 'The Earliest Evidence for Targum Onqelos from Mesopotamia', *JAB* 3 (2001), pp. 181–98.

⁵⁸The bowl published in S.A. Kaufman, 'A Unique Magic Bowl from Nippur', *JNES* 32 (1973), pp. 170–74 quotes two Hebrew verses, alternating with its Targum by one verse, but it also has two Hebrew verses without any translation: Ezek. 21.21–22; Jer. 2.2, TgJon Jer. 2.2 (with variants); Jer. 2.3; Jer. 2.1 or Ezek. 21.23; TgJon Jer. 2.1 or TgJon Ezek. 21.23.

⁵⁹A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Sather Classical Lectures, 54; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 25.

⁶⁰The reception of m. Meg. 1.8 is the topic of Ch. Seven.

monolingual or bilingual recitation. As Lieberman wrote more than half a century ago, 'The dependence of the Jewish preachers in Palestine on Greek translations of the Bible was probably much greater than we can judge from the material preserved in Midrashic literature'.⁶¹ He apparently thought of a Hebrew-Greek practice, as he continues: 'It is only natural that a preacher in a synagogue where the Shema was read in Greek quoted verses of the Bible accompanied by their standard Greek translations. The latter were probably eliminated either when the sermons were recorded in writing or when the Midrashim were compiled.' Indeed, a bilingual Hebrew-Aramaic reading of the Tora can hardly have satisfied the Greek-speaking Jews of Caesarea who read the Shema and the Amida in Greek, and they were unlikely to be alone in this regard.⁶² The very *raison d'être* of Greek translations like those by Aquila and Symmachus, which were produced in Palestine during the second century CE in close proximity to the rabbinic circles, suggests as much⁶³—whether or not Aquila reflects rabbinic exegesis.⁶⁴ Gen. R. 36.8 likewise reflects that Greek was spoken in (Palestinian?) synagogues: יהיו דברי תורה נאמרים בלשוננו של יפת בתוך 'Let the words of the Tora be said in Yaphet's language [Greek] amidst the tents of Shem' (par. γ. Meg. 1.11[8], 71b). Against the background of halakhic legitimacy, all this renders a bilingual Hebrew-Greek or monolingual Greek recitation much more likely than suggested by the single instances of positive evidence observed so far.

Greek retained its privileged status in the Byzantine Diaspora for many centuries as the *lingua franca* of Asia Minor and Egypt, while in

⁶¹Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, pp. 29–67 (59).

⁶²See section 2.2 above.

⁶³For Symmachus, see A. Salvesen, *Symmachus in the Pentateuch* (JSS Monograph, 15; Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991), as well as her reassessment in 'Did Aquila and Symmachus Shelter under the Rabbinic Umbrella?', in T.M. Law and A. Salvesen (eds.), *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis* (CBET, 66; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), pp. 107–25 (108). For Aquila, see, e.g., A.E. Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos* (Manchester University Press, 1931); D. Barthélemy, *Les Dévanciers d'Aquila* (VTSup, 10; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963).

⁶⁴For reservations, see L. Grabbe, 'Aquila's Translation and Rabbinic Exegesis', *JJS* 33 (1982), pp. 527–36; L.J. Greenspoon, 'Recensions, Revision, Rabbinics: Dominique Barthélemy and Early Developments in the Greek Traditions', *Textus* 15 (1990), pp. 153–63; E. Tov, 'The Evaluation of the Greek Scripture Translations in Rabbinic Sources', in F. García Martínez and M. Vervenne (eds.), *Interpreting Translation. Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust* (BETL, 192; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 385–99 (392–93). Cf. Law and Salvesen, *Greek Scripture*, *passim*.

the *Dioecesis Orientis* Aramaic would have competed with Greek in much the same way as in Palestine itself. Yet plausible as the assumption of Greek translations for synagogal use is, our evidence is suggestive at best; our only real clues are rabbinic references which are sparse and allusive themselves. We know that the Tora was read in Greek-speaking synagogues, but not in which language. We have abundant evidence for the literary use of the Septuagint in the works of Philo, Josephus, other Hellenistic Jewish authors and the New Testament, but all this counts for no more than circumstantial evidence for the language in which the Tora was read during the service. More substantial, as Tov points out,⁶⁵ is the manuscript evidence for corrections after the proto-Masoretic text of the Greek Scriptures, such as the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever which may have 'had the imprimatur of the rabbinic circles'. This scroll represents God's name in palaeo-Hebrew characters which relates to reading the scroll,⁶⁶ although once more, not necessarily within the synagogue service. The efforts to bring these texts in closer conformation may indicate that proto-rabbinic circles intended such MSS for use in the synagogue. While concrete non-rabbinic references to Greek reading practices are absent, the same applies to Hebrew practices in the Hellenistic Diaspora. Those scholars who still maintain a relatively monolithic view of synagogal practice in Late Antiquity in which Hebrew recitation is held to be the norm, must project the rabbinic ideal onto the whole Diaspora.⁶⁷

Likewise, the exact trajectory from a Greek to a Hebrew recitation in the Diaspora remains elusive.⁶⁸ On a long term view of history, Hebrew entirely replaced Greek in the recitation of the Tora. But exactly which practices existed or which processes of change resulted in a situation in which Greek was no longer used in the synagogue service, as confirmed

⁶⁵E. Tov, 'The Text of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek Bible Used in the Ancient Synagogues', in B. Olsson and M. Zetterholm (eds.), *The Ancient Synagogue: From Its Origins until 200 C.E. Papers Presented at an International Conference at Lund University October 14–17, 2001* (ConBNT, 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003), pp. 237–59.

⁶⁶For this interpretation, see pp. 278–80 below.

⁶⁷E.g. G. Veltri, 'Die Novelle 146 περί Εβραίων: Das Verbot des Targumvortrags in Justinians Politik' in M. Hengel and A.S. Schwemer (eds.), *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum* (WUNT, 72; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), pp. 116–30 (125). He only makes an exception for Alexandria up to the second century CE.

⁶⁸Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, pp. 546, 591–93.

by Maimonides,⁶⁹ is anyone's guess. Yet there is one precious window on this change. One document has long been hailed as crucial evidence for the changes in reading practices among Diaspora Jews: Justinian's *Novella* 146.⁷⁰ Issued on 8 February 553 CE, the emperor has learnt from 'their own petitions' that some Jews insisted upon the exclusive use of Hebrew whereas others consider it right to admit Greek as well. Thus the *Novella* ostensibly reflects a turning point in reading practices when advocates of the Hebrew language, quite possibly following the increase of rabbinic influence upon Diaspora Judaism, opposed the scriptural recitation in Greek. But it is unclear whether Greek was used exclusively, as an alternative to an exclusive Hebrew recitation, or in a dual-language practice. While the sixth-century abridgement of the *Novels* by Theodoros Hermopolitanus calls for a bilingual reading practice in which the Hebrew recitation should be followed by a translation into Greek or any other vernacular,⁷¹ the *Novella* itself remains ambiguous at this point. Regardless of the *Novella*'s wording, we probably should reckon with local, particular developments which were neither linear nor universal. If the use of epigraphic Hebrew is anything to go by—which is not a given—an increase in the use of Hebrew in the fifth and early sixth century CE vanished by the end of the latter century.⁷² There is no reason to assume that the liturgical use of languages in the Greek-speaking Diaspora would have been less variable and non-linear.

As we have seen,⁷³ epigraphical evidence, although often cited in discussions of language use in Late Antiquity, is of questionable value in this connection. Epigraphical language selection does not necessarily reflect the vernacular of those who commissioned the inscription—so much is clear from the emergence of Hebrew inscriptions on Italian tombstones from the fifth and seventh century CE onwards.⁷⁴ And even

⁶⁹ Maimonides, *משנה תורה* 1, 19.

⁷⁰ W.F. Smelik, 'Justinian's *Novella* 146 and Contemporary Judaism', in Law and Salvesen (eds.), *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis*, pp. 141–63, with references.

⁷¹ A. Linder, *The Jews in the Legal Sources of the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), p. 32.

⁷² See M. Williams, 'The Jews of Early Byzantine Venetia: The family of Faustinus 1, the Father', *JJS* 50 (1999), pp. 38–52 (50–51).

⁷³ See section 3.1 (p. 107) above.

⁷⁴ For the disparity between inscriptions and vernacular, see Leiwo, 'From Contact to Mixture', and Adams, 'Bilingualism at Delos'.

when it does, as would seem likely with the famous first century CE Theodotos inscription, we cannot simply infer from the vernacular in which language Scripture was read. But when the use of Hebrew for epigraphical and literary use finally dominated in Southern Italy by the ninth century, liturgical language selection may have followed suit—whilst the vernacular remained different. The Chronicle of Ahimaaz presents us with a picture of R. Silano acting as an interpreter on behalf of an esteemed colleague from the academy in Jerusalem,⁷⁵ who is visiting Venosa some time during the second half of the ninth century CE.⁷⁶ What the local rabbi interprets is the homily of the visitor, not the recitation of Scripture.

The evidence of Greek Bible citations is relevant insofar as they point to the continued existence and at least literary use of the Greek Bible among Jews.⁷⁷ Yet Bible citations were not common in Jewish inscriptions from the Diaspora,⁷⁸ not counting allusive conjunctions against grave violators.⁷⁹ Most citations are limited to just a few verses in the Diaspora, and occur in funerary inscriptions. Bible citations in bowls and amulets are in Hebrew or Aramaic, but these objects are, when provenanced, found in the areas east of the Levantine coast; the absence of Greek is thus hardly surprising. In Palestine inscriptions occur more frequently in synagogues; the vast majority of synagogue inscriptions are of the dedicatory type.⁸⁰ Fine distinguishes between two linguistic groups among these Palestinian inscriptions: those in Aramaic, Hebrew, or 'Greek with many Semitic features that often utilize similar literary formulae', and those composed in Koine Greek without Semitic features.⁸¹ The first group occurs mainly in those regions known to be 'Jewish', which may suggest that, in this instance at least, there is a link between the languages used in the synagogue and those selected for the inscriptions.

⁷⁵ See B.M. Klar, *מגילת אחימאז* (2nd edn, Jerusalem: Tarshish, 1973–1974), p. 16.

⁷⁶ J. Marcus, 'Studies in the Chronicle of Ahimaaz', *PAAJR* 5 (1933–1934), pp. 85–93.

⁷⁷ S. Fine and L. Rutgers, 'New Light on Judaism in Asia Minor During Late Antiquity: Two Recently Identified Menorahs', *JSQ* 3 (1996), pp. 1–23 (8–10); V. Colorni, 'L'uso del greco nella liturgia del giudaismo ellenistico e la novella 146 di Giustiniano', *Annali di Storia del Diritto* 8 (1964), pp. 19–80.

⁷⁸ Cf. Fine and Rutgers, 'New Light on Judaism', p. 7.

⁷⁹ L. Robert, 'Malédiction funéraires grecques', *CRAIBL* 1978, pp. 241–89.

⁸⁰ Fine, 'Synagogue Inscriptions', pp. 114–18.

⁸¹ Fine, 'Synagogue Inscriptions', p. 114.

Traditionally, the Septuagint had been treated with the same respect accorded to the Hebrew Scriptures, claiming divine inspiration for its very wording.⁸² This understanding of translations was not to remain. Notions of Hebrew as a pure, primordial and divine language destined for the end of days coalesced into the concept of Hebrew as the holy tongue.⁸³ Whilst the use of translations as substitutions for the original conflicted with the rabbinic insistence on the use of Hebrew for reading the Tora, the unassailable standing of the Greek translations even among the rabbis themselves prevented them from rooting out established practices. But they did stamp a preference for Hebrew on their rulings.

The rabbinic response becomes evident in two cases: the recitation of Esther and the writing of the Tora. The latter topic will be discussed in the following chapters which focus on the oral and written status of scriptural translation. The rabbis reached the conclusion that the obligation to read the scroll of Esther could be fulfilled by hearing it in one's own language, unless one understood Hebrew as well; in the latter case, Hebrew was compulsory.⁸⁴ At this point the sources are, however, inconsistent, and contradictory opinions exist, expressed explicitly in *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a and b. *Meg.* 18a, while appearing between the cracks of other texts. The Mishna makes allowances for the fact that foreign language speakers are used to hearing the scroll of Esther in a foreign language, most probably Greek (*m. Meg.* 2.1):

הקורא את המגילה למפריע לא יצא קראה על פה קראה תרגום⁸⁵ בכל לשון לא יצא
קורים ללעוזות בלעז בלעז והלעוז ששמע אשורית יצא

- [1] Who reads the scroll [of Esther] irregularly has not fulfilled his obligation.
- [2] [If] he reads it by heart, [or if] he reads it in a translation in any language, he has not fulfilled his obligation.
- [3] But they read it in a foreign language [Greek]⁸⁶ to those who speak a foreign language.

⁸² Brock, 'To Revise or Not to Revise', pp. 301–38.

⁸³ Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language'.

⁸⁴ *m. Meg.* 2.1; *t. Meg.* 2.6; *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a; *b. Meg.* 18a; *y. Sot.* 7.1, 21b.

⁸⁵ Ch. Albeck, *ששה סדרי משנה* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute; Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1959), II, p. 359 provides the interpretation: *או בכל לשון*, which is based on the Tosefta and Babylonian Talmud and reflects the tendency to consider 'Targum' as the Aramaic version *per se*; see p. 288 below with nn. 55, 57 and 58.

⁸⁶ See p. 34 n. 77 above.

- [4] Still, he who speaks a foreign language but heard it in Hebrew [Ashurit],⁸⁷ has fulfilled his obligation.

The obligation is to hear the scroll, as [4] implies, not to recite it, which would not make sense in largely illiterate societies, but the recitation must be performed from a written copy (2.2). The Mishna summarily lists the conditions that apply to recitation and hearing of the *megilla*: if the reciter does not read the scroll in a linear, continuous fashion [1], works from memory, or recites a translation [2], both he and those who hear his chant do not fulfil the obligation.

There is a palpable tension between the insistence upon Hebrew and the practice of foreign language recitation. Is it allowed to read and hear Esther in a foreign language [3] or is it not [2]? There is no justification to assume that they address different audiences, as these sections both refer to translations which would be used by non-Hebrew speakers, hence [3-4] do not license the use of translations for non-Hebrew speakers whereas [1-2] apply to Hebrew speaking audiences. But another difference between [3] and the other sections is expressed. It is true that [3] appears to modify [2] but only to a certain degree, for non-Hebrew versions are indeed granted in [3] but the Mishna does not state that those who hear the translation fulfil their obligation; their recitation has no bearing on the proper way of reading Esther. They only fulfil the obligation when also hearing the (to them) unintelligible Hebrew text as per [4]; in other words, the use of translations is optional but does not fulfil the obligation to read it in Hebrew—in keeping with the general optional character of translation in rabbinic eyes. The text has to be performed in Hebrew from a written and Hebrew exemplar [2,4]. In this scheme, translating has no bearing on the obligation to hear the scroll and is nothing but a gratuitous act on behalf of those who do not understand the Hebrew. A further restriction is introduced in m. Meg. 2.2 concerning the written form of Esther: **לא יצא עד שתהא כתובה אשורית על הספר בדיו** ‘...he has not fulfilled his obligations, unless it is written in Ashurit, on a scroll and with ink’.⁸⁸ Apparently, the translation had to be performed orally, that is, by heart, but not recited from a written text.

⁸⁷ ‘Ashurit’ cannot refer to script in this context, but denotes Hebrew as a language.

⁸⁸ t. Meg. 2.6 reinforces this restriction by לעולם .

Another reading of the gap between the third and last sentence in this mishna is possible: those who speak Greek but hear the Hebrew version fulfil their obligations, but what about Greek speakers who do not hear the Hebrew, but only the Greek from a written text? The Mishna does not elaborate, but the gap may be a silent admission that they may indeed fulfil their obligation by a monolingual Greek recitation. In this reading, in which we assume a difference between bilingual and monolingual recitations, [4] does not render [3] purely optional but adds the positive and preferred alternative that a reading in Hebrew will do for non-Hebrew speakers. The Mishna does not embrace the possibility that Greek will do, as intimated by the absence of the positive conclusion יצא 'he fulfils' in [3], but does not deny it either. It pushes Hebrew, or at least a bilingual reading, without altogether ruling out an alternative arrangement. This reading of the Mishna becomes more likely when we read m. Meg. 2.1 in conjunction with the Tosefta and Yerushalmi.

Notwithstanding this precarious balance between the Hebrew and its translations, the Mishna suggests that different practices were in vogue earlier on. Apparently the Mishna settles the optional function of the translations in a challenge to earlier practices which allowed for a more prominent place for translations. The equality of Greek, or any other foreign language, and Hebrew was controversial. Particularly instructive is the parallel in the Tosefta to m. Meg. 2.1 in t. Meg. 2.6 (my emphasis):

קראה בלעז הלעוזות יוצאין ידי חובתן קראה אשורית שומעין ושואין שומעין יוצאין ידי חובתן לעולם אין יוצאין ידי חובתן עד שתהא כתוב' אשורית בלשון עברי על הספר
בדיו

- [1] [If] he recites it in a foreign language, those who speak a foreign language thereby fulfil their obligation.
- [2] [If] he recites it in Ashurit [= Hebrew language], both those who understand and those who do not understand thereby fulfil their obligation.
- [3] Under all circumstances they fulfil their obligation only if it is written in Ashurit [= square Hebrew script], in the Hebrew language, on a scroll, in ink.

While the Mishna is ambiguous, the Tosefta is inconsistent: foreign language speakers fulfil their obligation in a foreign language [1] only if the scroll is written in Hebrew [3]. In contrast to the Mishna, the Tosefta in fact uses the positive conclusion יצא concerning the foreign language recitation (קראה). The incoherence of this tosefta is conspicuous, unless we assume that they translated the Hebrew text on the spot into Greek (or any

other foreign language), and that such an oral translation also qualifies. This scenario would imply reading from memory rather than a written text, which contradicts 2.5 and all other rabbinic sources that stress the biblical injunction to read the *megilla* as it is written.

So how do we make sense of the text as it stands? Both Veltri and Lieberman regard the words *בלשון עברית* in [3] as a gloss, because they are missing in m. Meg. 2.1;⁸⁹ Lieberman adds that these ‘unnecessary’ words are absent in MS Lon445 and Rashba’s exemplar of the Tosefta. Assuming that they are indeed a gloss, the original meaning would have been slightly different: the scroll must be written in the square Hebrew script, Ashurit, but not necessarily in the Hebrew language. The translation in [1] might be performed from a Greek text written in square script conform [3] without the gloss. On that assumption, the Tosefta makes sense indeed. Even so the awkward *pas de deux* between [1] and [2] still remains, suggesting a strong preference for Hebrew. For all that, this assumption of a gloss is by no means self-evident. We should do well to remember that MS Lon445 also omits *ואין שימיעין* in [2], thereby removing every difficulty in the Tosefta, which renders its version suspect.⁹⁰ In addition, the necessary hypothesis that a Greek translation had been transliterated into Hebrew script flies in the face of the spirit of the Tosefta. While not impossible, this hypothesis would seem to be based on later harmonizations which break the link between Ashurit as both the Hebrew language and the square script used for Bible scrolls. The question prompts itself, what purpose is served by the insistence on square script if not an emphasis on the original language? The issue of script is always raised in connection with the question whether translation was deemed acceptable. The physical form of the text carried implications for its translatability. Wherever text-immanent criteria determine the script to be essential, they also press for the original language of the text.⁹¹

So is this a late editorial harmonization or an authentic original reading? The word *אשורית* in [2] refers to something being heard, hence language; the parallelism between [1] and [2] indicates the same; the gloss *בלשון עברית* in [3] is therefore an explanatory gloss, entirely consistent

⁸⁹ Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 120–21; Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, IV, pp. 1144–45.

⁹⁰ For Lon445’s harmonization in t. Meg. 3.41, see pp. 164–67 above.

⁹¹ See, e.g., m. Sot. 7; b. Sot. 32a–33b; y. Sot. 7.1, 21b. For the link between script and language, see Ch. Seven.

with [2]. The parallel *mishna*, which is hardly decisive to determine a later gloss in the *tosefta*, does not remove the tension in the *tosefta* itself. Even without the gloss in [3], the first two rulings [1] and [2] pull in different directions, and even if a Greek scroll written in Hebrew characters is possible (specimens have been preserved in the Cairo Geniza), who is fooling who here? It is still Greek. If בלשון עברית is a gloss, it may have been designed to counter the unintended interpretation that such transliterations had the stamp of rabbinic approval.

The significant qualification in [2] that even those who hear but do not understand Hebrew nonetheless fulfil their obligation points to a proclivity toward reading in Hebrew only, which does not go well with the first ruling. Thus the *tosefta* combines various takes on the use of languages for public reading, with a pull towards new directions represented by the qualification that even those who do not understand Hebrew can fulfil their obligation by hearing the text in Hebrew.⁹² The *Tosefta* itself gives another pointer exactly how this ruling is to be understood, as *t. Meg.* 2.5 recalls the precedent of R. Meir's visit to Asia Minor, where 'he did not find a *megilla* written in Hebrew':⁹³

קראה על פה לא יצא ידי חובתו אמ' ר' שמעון בן לעזר מעשה בר' מאיר שהלך לאסיה
 לעבר את השנה ולא מצא שם מגלה כתובה עברית כתבה מפיו וחזר וקראה מתוכה
 One who recites it orally does not fulfil his obligation [to hear the *megilla*].
 Said R. Shimon b. Leazar, The precedent⁹⁴ is when R. Meir went to [Minor]
 Asia to intercalate the year and did not find there a *megilla* which was written
 in Hebrew. So he wrote it from memory, returned and recited [the *megilla*]
 from it.

The emphasis is on a Hebrew scroll in an area where Greek would have been the vernacular. Yet R. Meir understood Hebrew, so could not fulfil his personal obligation by means of a Greek version (so explicitly *t. Meg.* 2.6 [2], but not *m. Meg.* 2.1), nor could he recite the Hebrew from memory. His solution—to produce a written copy from memory and to recite this text accordingly—has a twist, because R. Meir does not just comply himself but also returns to the community to recite the *megilla* for the benefit of all. Consequently, his solution envisages a dual recitation for everyone: even

⁹²This position is hardened in *Sof.* 1.7–8 and *Sef. T.* 1.6.

⁹³Cf. *y. Meg.* 4.1, 74d; *b. Meg.* 18b; *Gen. R.* 36.8. See also Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, v, p. 1143.

⁹⁴For מעשה as a legal precedent, see p. 118 n. 63 above.

though translation is permitted for those who do not follow the Hebrew, it is only an accompaniment of the Hebrew original. The recitation in Greek [י] has become the oral-performative translation of the rabbinic ideal. Indeed, t. Meg. 2.5 goes on to state, the recitation is valid *בין שהעמיד* 'whether [or not] one set up an interpreter for it'. R. Meir's precedent withdraws any endorsement of the practice of translation in the fulfilment of the obligation, and thereby represents a less pragmatic view: translations are optional extras by which one cannot fulfil the obligation to hear the *megilla*, and even where Hebrew scrolls are neither found nor understood, there is a compelling need to introduce one.

In y. Meg. 4.1, 74d, the Yerushalmi reinforces the Tosefta's drift and elaborates on the gratuitous character of the oral-performative translation and the insistence on a written source text for the Hebrew chant. In a long sequence of short units, three are directly relevant for the reception of m. Meg. 2.1. First, R. Yose states that the absence of any translation does not render the recitation invalid on the basis of 'our rabbis' who do not include a translation when they read the Tora during a fast. The translation is optional. Second, R. Zeora in the name of Ḥananel justified the use of translation on the basis of Neh. 8.8, yet renders the subtle distinction between the Tora and translation relevant in the context of fulfilling the biblical commandment: *מניין לתרגום רבי זעורא בשם רב חננאל ויקראו בספר* 'From what source [do we derive] the translation? R. Zeora [said] in the name of Ḥananel, "And they recited the book of the Tora [of God]" (Neh. 8.8), that is recited Scripture, "clearly", that is the translation'. Ergo, the Hebrew is recited, whereas the Targum serves as its explanation but not as Scripture's recitation.

The Yerushalmi then dwells on the account of R. Meir's precedent which receives a slightly more cautious reception than it does in the Tosefta. The tone is set with the view ascribed to R. Zeora, once more in the name of Ḥananel, *אפילו רגיל תורה כעזרה לא יהא הוגה מפיו וקורא* 'Even someone who knows the Tora as well as Ezra may not recount it from memory but reads [it]'. Challenging this view, the *baraita* of R. Meir is brought up, whose copy written from memory would seem to undermine R. Zeora's rule. While the Tosefta emphasizes R. Meir's ingenuity and the use of a Hebrew scroll for the recitation of Esther, the Yerushalmi thus raises the question whether his precedent endorses a recitation from memory. The authorial voice expresses the objection that *משיעת אין למידין*

הדחק 'we do not infer halakhic conclusions from an emergency situation'.⁹⁵ Thus the authorial voice questions the validity of R. Meir's copy, in line with the view ascribed to R. Zeora, because R. Meir's solution still counts as reciting from memory. An attempt to rescue his solution follows: ויש אומרים שתיים כתב את הראשונה מתוך פיו וכתב את השנייה מתוך הראשונה וגנו את הראשונה וקרא בשנייה 'And there are some who say that he wrote two scrolls: the first he wrote from memory, but the second he copied from the first; then he hid the first and read the second'. He hid the first, ostensibly because it still is a text from memory. The Yerushalmi does not reverse the tendency of the Tosefta to emphasize the necessity of a written source, but augments it. A written text, copied from another exemplar, is to be used at all times. In mitigation, it proceeds to relate the ability of two rabbis who could write the Tora from memory, concluding with Rabbi's praise that any generation that has such capable men in its midst may consider itself happy.

The importance of the Tosefta's qualification cannot be overestimated, but was not generally shared, not even in the Yerushalmi. An explicit admission that the *halakha* permits the use of written Greek versions to fulfil the obligation is put forward in y. Meg. 2.1, 73a:

ר' יוסה בשם ר' אחא ר' זעורה בשם ר' לעזר והיא שתהא כתובה בלעז

- [1] R. Yose in the name of R. Aḥa, R. Zeora in the name of R. Eleazar, '[But they do read it in a foreign language to those who speak a foreign language (m. Meg. 2.1)], that applies when the scroll itself is written in that foreign language.

Two rabbis transmit in the name of their masters the ruling that the Greek translation, which facilitates the obligation to hear the *megilla*, concerns a written copy rather than an oral-performative translation alongside the Hebrew recitation. The Mishna's ambiguity about the role of Greek translations and the Tosefta's *contradictio in terminis* are exposed here, in contrast to y. Meg. 4.1, 74d. At this point, y. Meg. 2.1, 73a takes the bull by the horn:

מה אנן קיימין אם בשהיתיה כתובה אשורית ותירגמה בלעז הדא דתנינן בכל לשון אם בשהיתיה כתובה בלעז ותירגמה אשורית הדא היא דתני מה בין ספרים למגילת אסתר אלא שהספרים נכתבין בכל לשון ומגילת אסתר אינה נכתבת אלא אשורית אמר ר'

⁹⁵b. Meg. 18b argues that R. Meir's exceptional knowledge made his case different, and concludes: שעת הדחק שאני 'it is different at a time of an emergency'.

שמואל בר סוסרטאי תיפתר שהיתה כתובה גיגנטון תני שמואל טעה והשמיט פסוק אחד
ותירגמו המתרגם יצא און אמרין בכל לשון לא יצא ואת אמר הכין שמואל כדעתיה
[ד]שמואל אמ' היתה כתובה כהילכתה הלעז יוצא בה בלעז

- [2] How shall we interpret the matter?
- [3] If we deal with a case in which the scroll was written in Ashurit [= Hebrew language] and one translated it into a foreign language, that is the case concerning which we have learned [in the mishna], 'or in any other language [he has not fulfilled his obligation]'.
- [4] If it is a case in which it was written in a foreign language, and one translated it into Ashurit, that is a case for which is taught, What is the difference between scrolls and the scroll of Esther? Scrolls may be written in any language, whereas the scroll of Esther may be written only in Ashurit.
- [5] R. Shmuel b. Susratai said, You can interpret it in the case it is written in uncial [script].⁹⁶
- [6] Shmuel taught, Had [the reader] erred and omitted one verse, but the person who interpreted translated it [despite the omission], he has fulfilled his obligation.
- [7] We say that if one read it in any language [other than Hebrew] one has not carried out his obligation, and you say this?
- [8] Shmuel [taught] in accordance with his own view, for Shmuel said, If it was written in a foreign language in accord with the *halakha*, one may carry out his obligation by reading it in that foreign language.

The problem with a written Greek translation is laid out clearly. It is neither allowed to fulfil one's obligation by listening to a translation from Hebrew into Greek [3], nor vice versa [4]. The *baraita* in [4] indicates that written translations of Esther, in contrast to the other scrolls, are denied *ab initio*.⁹⁷ On this view a translation cannot be performed from a written copy, and only a translation by heart is permissible, yet such an oral-performative translation does not qualify as a written text that must be recited to fulfil the obligation. What the Mishna left unsaid, and the Tosefta could only frame in contradictory terms, leaps out in these questions. The full force of the argument that Esther's text is defined by its own stipulation to celebrate Purim 'as its writing and as its language' (Est. 8:7), as *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a had stated previously,⁹⁸ bears down on the traditional leeway Greek speakers

⁹⁶For my translation, see the discussion below.

⁹⁷The *baraita* resembles arguments in, i.a., *m. Meg.* 1.8 and *b. Meg.* 8b–9b.

⁹⁸In the previous unit; see p. 143 above.

had been allowed to enjoy. The law is laid down in strong terms: Esther may only be written in Ashurit. A real contradiction exists which requires a resolution.

R. Shmuel b. Susratai proffers a resolution which has never failed to baffle interpreters. The unique word גיגנטיך in [5] remains a crux despite considerable efforts to understand it within its present context. Among the numerous suggestions put forward mention should be made of 'Greek' (< γραικόν), 'in our script' (< γραφικόν), 'bilingual' (< δίγλωττον), 'native, indigenous' (< γεγενέτης = αὐτοχθών), a term for shorthand script (< cognitum), the opening words of Greek Esther, Καὶ ἐγένετο, and 'in large script' (< γιγανταῖον).⁹⁹

The problem with this unit may lie in the circumstance that it lumps together R. Shmuel b. Susratai's opinion with Tannaitic traditions of Rav Shmuel,¹⁰⁰ which do not necessarily address the same issue. Note that we do not have a real-time discussion in [2-8]. The two rabbis are Palestinian and Babylonian *amoraim* of different generations, hence [6] is not a reply to [5], nor does it seem to be connected too closely in content. Moreover, in [8] R. Shmuel does not retort to the objection raised in [7], but [8] brings another of his teachings to bear upon the topic. Hence this unit represents a virtual dispute, constructed in an attempt to understand the nonconformist opinion that written Greek translations are permitted to fulfil the biblical injunction of hearing the scroll of Esther. Consequently, the alignment of teachings in [5, 6, 8] may only partially inform the point of reference in [5].

Lines [6] and [7] presume a bilingual Hebrew-Greek recitation. In contrast to the optional character of the translation in t. Meg. 2.5-6 and y. Meg. 4.1, 74d, the translation in [6] suffices to fulfil the obligation by

⁹⁹ See Levy, WTM, I, pp. 322-23; S. Krauss, 'Zur griechischen und lateinischen Lexikographie aus jüdischen Quellen', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 2 (1893), pp. 494-548 (514); S. Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targumim* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1898-1899), II, p. 171; Kohut, השלם, ערוך השלם, II, p. 234; L. Blau, *Zur Einleitung in die Heilige Schrift* (Budapest: Trübner, 1894), p. 90; A. Neubauer, 'Literary Gleanings, XII, The Hebrew Bible in Shorthand Writing', *JQR* 7 (1895), pp. 361-64; M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (2 vols.; New York: Choresb, repr. 1926), p. 225 (sub גיגנטיך); G. Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuhabräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch* (Göttingen: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1938), p. 71.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Y.N. Epstein, מביא לנוסח המשנה (repr. Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 2001), I, p. 215; Ch. Albeck, מביא לתלמודים (repr. Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1987), pp. 31-32.

itself. This teaching and its objection do not answer the original question in [1] how reading Esther in Greek can involve a written Greek copy of Esther unless we assume that the translation was not oral-performative but actually read out from a written copy. And indeed, since fulfilment on the basis of an oral-performative translation contradicts [3], and R. Shmuel endorses written copies in [8], his teaching in [6] implies the use of two written texts, one in Hebrew, the other in Greek.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, neither his teaching in line [8] nor R. Shmuel b. Susratai's in [5] necessarily involve a bilingual recitation, but may simply refer to a monolingual Greek reading. All in all, [6-8] do not necessarily define the circumstances that apply to [5] other than the use of written Greek translations which they clarify as R. Shmuel's particular Tannaitic tradition.

What, then, does גיגנטיון in [5] refer to in answer to the question how a written copy plays a part in reading Esther in Greek to those who speak Greek? The solution of גיגנטיון is not 'bilingual', a meaning that only seems plausible on the basis of the bilingual practice of [6], which does not necessarily apply to [1] and [5], and which involves a complex transliteration from δῖγλωττον into גיגנטיון. What we know is that the solution must conform with the following conditions as defined by [1-4]:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. The text is written [1, 5, 6-8] | 3. recited rather than translated [3] |
| 2. in a foreign language [1, 4] | 4. while written in Ashurit [4]. |

A Hebrew-Greek MS would not meet these conditions because the bilingual format of source text and translation comprises two texts, hence does not alter the situation. Two solutions fit the bill: a Greek translation written in square Hebrew script would fulfil all these conditions, as would a Hebrew version transliterated into Greek (as per the second column of Origen's Hexapla). Such transcriptions may have existed at this time, for both possibilities occur in the discussion of b. Meg. 8b in connection with the requirement for Scripture to be written in Ashurit.¹⁰² The most attractive solution of גיגנטיון is γιγανταῖον 'in large script', a possibility listed by Kohut—although he prefers δῖγλωττον—if understood to refer to the uncial (or majuscule) Greek script in which the majority of important MSS

¹⁰¹b. Meg. 18b takes up this ruling (7"ת) but relates the missing words to illegible letters or lacunae.

¹⁰²See below, section 7.4 (p. 311).

of the LXX are written.¹⁰³ This interpretation not only meets the requirements of [3-4] but is also more compelling in terms of transliteration than any other suggestion.

The outcome of these findings isolates R. Shmuel b. Susratai's solution, since reading a Hebrew text in Greek characters hardly addresses the real issue at hand: reading the scroll of Esther in Greek translation. This circumstance may explain the fact that his solution is not taken up but lingered in relative obscurity.

More pertinently, the following references to Rav Shmuel's traditions in [6-8] boldly claim Tannaitic authorization for recitation from a Greek MS, most conspicuously even as a translation that follows the Hebrew reading. Rav Shmuel not only allows translations to be written ('in accord with the *halakha*'), but even regards the reading of this translation as a fulfilment of the obligation for non-Hebrew speakers. On this interpretation, the Hebrew is not obligatory for non-Hebrew speakers. This opinion is far more permissive than the Mishna—unless the Mishna glosses over the possibility, as suggested above, without denying it. In point of fact, Rav Shmuel's opinion agrees with m. Meg. 2.1 [3], with the only difference that Rav Shmuel refers to a written copy as would be expected in a monolingual recitation. At this juncture, we should recall that the Yerushalmi opens with R. Yose and R. Zeora who relate the mishna [3] to scrolls written in a foreign language. Further on, in y. Meg. 4.1, 74d, three cases of improper translation are recorded including a translation read from a written copy.

Rav Shmuel allows the Mishna's rule that they read it in Greek to those who speak Greek to stand without qualification that such a reading is merely an oral-performative translation alongside the Hebrew recitation, which is confirmed in the Babylonian gemara on m. Meg. 2.1 after explaining that the translation 'is written in the Greek vernacular' (b. Meg. 18a):

רב ושמואל דאמרי תרוייהו לעז יווני לכל כשר והא קתני יוונית ליוונים אין לכולי עלמא לא אינהו דאמור כרבן שמעון בן גמליאל דתנן רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר אף ספרים לא התירו שיכתבו אלא יוונית

Rav and Shmuel both said, The Greek vernacular is permitted (כשר) for everyone.

But surely it teaches, Greek to the Greeks [who understand Greek, instead of] the rest of the world, [for which Greek is] not [valid]?

They agreed with Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel, as we have learned, Rabban

¹⁰³For uncials, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 138.

Shimon ben Gamaliel says, Even the scrolls were only allowed to be written in Greek (m. Meg. 1.8).

The Bavli envisages Greek translations of Esther and even airs the opinion that Greek is valid for those who do not even understand that language, as some medieval *posqim* still maintained. This was doubtlessly a pragmatic view, as Greek speaking communities had little use for Hebrew. Withal the candid discussion of the Yerushalmi and Bavli, the nonconformist opinions of Rav and Shmuel may be acknowledged, but they are ultimately restrained along the lines suggested in the Mishna and Tosefta already. As y. Meg. 2.1, 73a concludes, anyone who knows Ashurit may fulfil his obligation only in that very language, even if his vernacular differs. Moreover, he cannot fulfil someone else's obligation in any other language than Ashurit. b. Meg. 18a follows suit. That the Bavli mentions all this, however, may serve a less pragmatic view, for the Bavli uses the lenient view to prohibit translations written in any other language. Yet the use of Greek would be of no importance in the Babylonian situation, where the vernacular was either Persian or Aramaic. Apparently the main objective of the Bavli is to restrict the use of written copies to Greek ones only, these having no practical use, though they were still held in high esteem. The Yerushalmi does not imply this, sticking to the Mishnaic rule that only reading the text, or hearing it read, in Hebrew leads to fulfilling one's obligation.

5.3 The exclusion of pericopes

Scriptural translation may have remained optional, but this status does not signify a lack of interest in their contents. On the contrary, the rabbis took an active interest in the precise wording of the oral-performative translation, and considered restrictions in respect of public reading and oral-performative translation. This is evident from several lists of passages known as the 'lists of forbidden targumim',¹⁰⁴ which address the broader

¹⁰⁴See Berliner, *Targum Onkelos*, pp. 217–218; M. Ginsburger, 'Verbotene Thargumim', *MGWJ* 44 (1900), pp. 1–7; M. McNamara, 'Some Early Rabbinic Citations and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch', *Revista della Studi Orientali* 41 (1966), pp. 1–15; M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (AnBib, 27; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966), pp. 46–49, 292; Heinemann, *ברכת כהנים*, P.S. Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists of Forbidden Targumim', *JJS* 27 (1976), pp. 177–91; M.L. Klein, 'Not to be Translated in Public', *JJS* 39 (1988), pp. 80–91.

issue of the public reading of Scripture: passages that are 'read but not interpreted', 'read and interpreted', or 'neither read nor interpreted' in public. Arguably, each of these categories will inform our understanding of the rabbinic perception of scriptural translation.

Three lists have been preserved, in Mishna, Tosefta and Bavli. The briefest formulation of these lists is found in m. Meg. 4.10.¹⁰⁵

מעשה ראובן נקרא ולא מתרגם מעשה תמר נקרא ומתרגם מעשה (ה)עגל (ה)ראשון
נקרא ומתרגם והשיני נקרא ולא מתרגם ברכת כהנים [ו]מעשה דוד ואמנון לא נקרים
ולא מתרגמים אין מפטירים במרכבה ר' יהודה מתיר ר' אליעז' אומ' אין מפטירין
בהודע את ירושלם

The story of Reuben is read but not interpreted.

The story of Tamar is read and interpreted.

The first story of the [Golden] Calf is read and interpreted.

The second [story of the Golden Calf] is read but not interpreted.

The blessing of the priests, the story of David and of Amnon are neither read nor interpreted.¹⁰⁶

The [chapter of the] Chariot is not used as a prophetic portion.

[However,] R. Yehuda permits.

R. Eliezer says, 'Cause Jerusalem to know' is not used as a prophetic portion.

This mishna concludes the final chapter of tractate Megilla about the various rules of public recitation. It lists nine readings, five from the Tora and four from the Prophets. The Tosefta includes six additional passages not found in the Mishna (four from the Tora, two from the Prophets), all of which are 'read and interpreted'. The Bavli agrees with the Tosefta in its selection of passages and their sequence, but curiously misses the chapter of the Chariot (*Merkava*). In lieu of a list, the Yerushalmi offers three brief comments on the Story of Reuben and the Second Account of the Golden Calf, followed by three statements on passages included in the other lists (the priestly blessing, Ezekiel 1 and 16)—the closest it gets to presenting a list. Rudimentary as its discussion is, its sequence agrees

¹⁰⁵The parallels can be found in t. Meg. 3.31-38, y. Meg. 4.11-12(10), 75c and b. Meg. 25a-b.

¹⁰⁶Variant reading: 'read but not interpreted'. See below.

¹⁰⁷Figure 5.1 lists the pericopes in their order of appearance in Mishna and Tosefta, from top to bottom; white boxes = read and interpreted; grey = read but not interpreted; black = neither read nor interpreted.

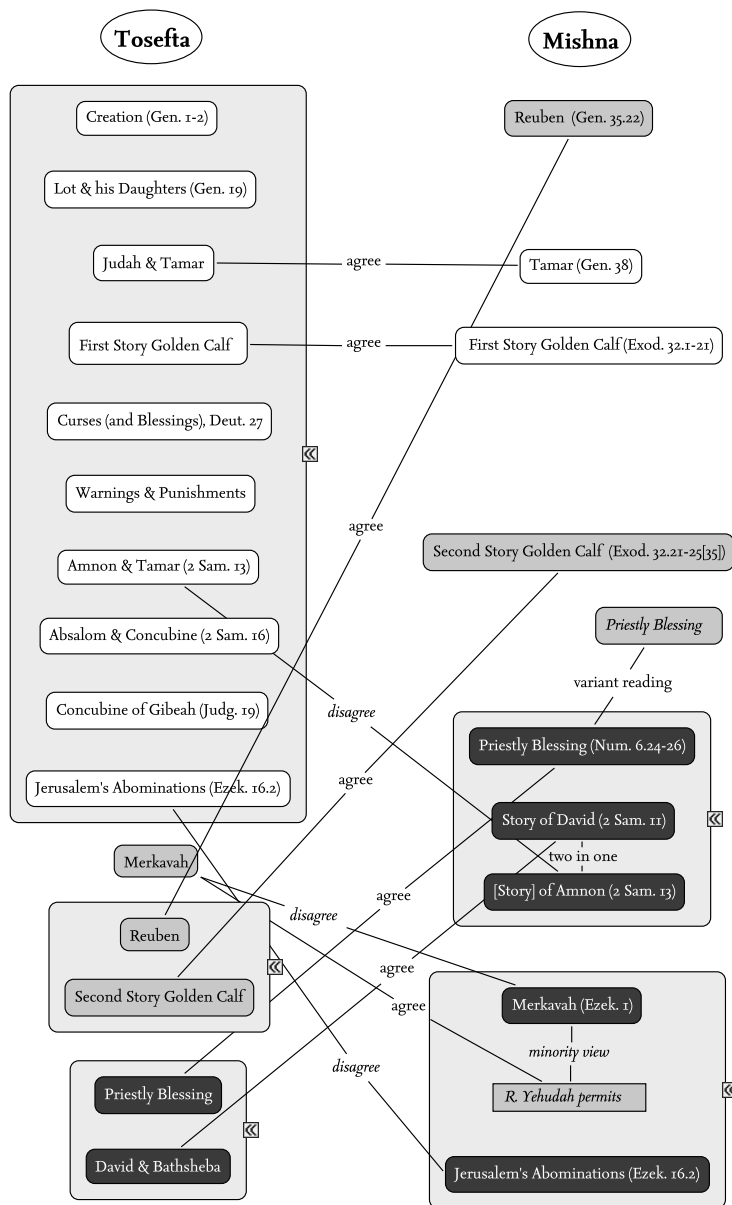


Figure 5.1: m. Meg. 4.10 and t. Meg. 3.3I-38¹⁰⁷

with the Mishna over and against that of the Tosefta and Bavli.¹⁰⁸ The three lists of Mishna, Tosefta and Bavli are clearly interrelated inasmuch as they discuss three largely overlapping series of biblical passages on the same terms. May they be read out in public, and if so, may they also be accompanied by an oral-performative translation? For an overview of all passages involved, and their distribution and sequence in the sources, see Figure 5.1 and Table 5.2. Similar as these lists are, there are revealing discrepancies between the three lists in presentation, terminology, rulings, pericopes, and commentary. Unlike the Mishna, the Tosefta precedes the actual list with a taxonomy (3.31):

יש נקראין ומתרגמין נקראין ולא מתרגמין לא נקראין ולא מתרגמין

There are [passages which may] be read and interpreted, read but not interpreted, neither read nor interpreted.

The Bavli follows suit and quotes this summary statement under *תנו רבנן*, 'our rabbis taught'. However, important manuscripts omit the final category, 'neither read nor interpreted', which omission is textcritically the authentic reading for the Bavli, as I will demonstrate below. It is no coincidence that in one MS of the Tosefta, Codex Vienna, the last category, 'neither read nor interpreted', is absent as well. The Mishna has no taxonomic preamble as it has in other chapters;¹⁰⁹ instead, all its passages are arranged in their canonical order, starting with Gen. 35 and ending with Ezek. 16, in contrast to both the Tosefta and the Bavli which order the passages according to their taxonomy (see Figure 5.1; the Bavli agrees with the Tosefta in the sequence of items). Beneath the taxonomic order there is a suborder of canonical sequence in these two sources.¹¹⁰

That the Mishna does not adhere to the same taxonomy also follows from its use of a fourth 'category' for Ezek. 1 and 16, *אין מפטירין ב*, 'they do not end with the prophetic portion of...'. Even though this phrase ultimately boils down to 'neither read nor interpreted'—you are unlikely to interpret what you did not read in the first place—its formal distinction from *אין מפטירין* *לא נקראין ולא מתרגמין* is not inconsequential. The phrase *אין מפטירין*

¹⁰⁸The prooftext of Job 15.18-19 may be intended for either the Story of Reuben or that of Tamar, or perhaps both; both Scal3 and the *editio princeps* do not identify the passage involved.

¹⁰⁹See m. Sot. 7; section 2.2 above (p. 51).

¹¹⁰With one exception: the story of the concubine of Gibeah should have preceded the passage of Amnon and Tamar. Here thematic association apparently prevailed.

ב- reflects a concern with public reading rather than interpretation; as the choice of prophetic portions was probably still rather fluid, and not all of the Prophets would ever be read, this may well have been the original query, to which the aspect of translation came as a secondary concern.¹¹¹

On the other hand, the Mishna does use מתרגמין ולא נקראין for the prophetic portions of 2 Samuel 11 and 13. The use of these different categorizations points to their heterogenous origins: it is unlikely that an editor created an additional, superfluous category if the other category had already been in place; the passages were evidently brought together to complete the lists. The Yerushalmi agrees with the Mishnaic terminology, the Bavli with that of the Tosefta.

The Tosefta differs not only in its formal categorization of Ezek. 1 and 16 but also in its evaluation. The Mishna prohibits the use of Ezek. 16 as a *haftara*, whilst the Tosefta states that the pericope is 'read and interpreted'. But the Tosefta follows this opinion up with a story about R. Eliezer, who strongly disagrees with this practice. Conversely, the corresponding mishna only mentions the minority opinion of R. Eliezer, obscuring any dissonant voices. It seems evident that the obscured majority view would have agreed with the Tosefta in allowing both recitation and oral-performative translation, or would have ruled against public translation of Ezek. 16, but the Mishna's silence ultimately renders the issue unclear.

More complicated is the case of Ezek. 1 because of the esoteric potential of the מעשה מרכבה 'the work of the Chariot'. The anonymous view in the Mishna does not even permit the reading of this chapter in Hebrew (אין מפטירין ב-), let alone an interpretation, whereas the Tosefta permits recitation in agreement with the Mishna's minority view ascribed to R. Yehuda.¹¹² Surprisingly, the Tosefta's wording (with קורין rather than נקראין) invalidates its own taxonomy: קורין אותה ברבים, 'they read it in public'; any reference to the oral-performative translation is left out here. The best explanation for this anomaly is to regard the Tosefta's statement as a comment on an earlier ruling on the same pericope, which did not permit public reading. This earlier ruling may either have followed the Mishna's form, אין מפטירין ב-, which likewise fails to refer to the practice of translation, or 'neither read nor interpreted'; either way the prohibition of interpreting is silently assumed.

¹¹¹ So Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', p. 181.

¹¹² The Bavli does not even mention this chapter at all in this connection.

Verse	Yerushalmi	Mishna	Tosefta	Bavli	Targum
Gen. 1-2	-	-	r&i	r&i	r&i
Gen. 19	-	-	r&i	r&i	r&i
Gen. 35	comment	r, ni	r, ni	r, ni	r, ni
Gen. 38	comment	r&i	r&i	r&i	r&i
Exod. 32.1-20	-	r&i	r&i	r&i	r&i / r, ni ¹¹³
Exod. 32.21-35 ¹¹⁴	comment	r, ni	r, ni	r, ni	r, ni
Num. 6.24-26	r, ni / nr, ni ¹¹⁵	nr, ni	nr, ni ¹¹⁶	r, ni	r, ni
Deut. 27.15-?	-	-	r&i	r&i	r&i
Proh.&Pen. ¹¹⁷	-	-	r&i	r&i	r&i
Judg. 19	-	-	r&i	r&i	translated
2 Sam. 11.2-17	-	nr, ni	nr, ni	- ¹¹⁸	translated
2 Sam. 13.1-9	-	nr, ni	r&i	r&i	translated
2 Sam. 16.21-22	-	-	r&i	- / r&i ¹¹⁹	translated
Ezek. 1.4-28	nr, ni / r, ni ¹²⁰	nr, ni / r, ni	r, ni or r&i	-	r&i / r, ni ¹²¹
Ezek. 16.1-	nr, ni	nr, ni	r&i	r&i	r&i

Table 5.2: To read, not to interpret¹²²

¹¹³TgNeof does not translate all verses of the first account of the Golden Calf; see A. Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1: Targum Palestinense ms de la Biblioteca Vaticana* (6 vols.; Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1970), II, p. 209; Klein, 'Not to be Translated', p. 89. TgOnq and TgPsJ do.

¹¹⁴For the extent of the passage, see Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', pp. 179–80.

¹¹⁵According to R. Ḥelbo, the priestly blessing is 'read but not interpreted', but R. Yose's reply takes 'neither read nor interpreted' for granted (y. Meg. 4.12(10), 75c). It is not necessarily an error; R. Ḥelbo's position may be a correction of an earlier position.

¹¹⁶MS Vienna does not read ברכת כהנים, but Erfurt and Lon445 do. Rabbenu Ḥananel supports the reading (b. Meg. 25a).

¹¹⁷Proh.&Pen. = Prohibitions and Penalties, which remain unspecified.

¹¹⁸The Bavli does not refer to David and Bathsheva. Instead, it has 'David and Amnon', which it rules out for either reciting or interpreting.

¹¹⁹The pericope of Absalom and his father's concubines is bracketed in Vilna, absent in Pes1516, but occurs in Gött, ColX, Ox23, Lon400, Mun95, Vat134, Ena2075, and TS F1(2)20 with the same explanation as the preceding pericope of Amnon and Tamar. Since both pericopes are included in the *siman* preceding them, the minus is due to homoioteleuton.

¹²⁰R. Yehuda permits, apparently in disagreement.

¹²¹Some manuscripts do not translate all of Ezek. 1.26.

¹²²In the table, r&i = read and interpreted; r, ni = read but not interpreted; nr, ni = neither read nor interpreted; translated = not selected as a prophetic portion in any rites

A further disagreement between Mishna and Tosefta concerns the pericope of Amnon and Tamar. Although the Mishna seemingly refers to one pericope, *מעשה דוד ואמנון* 'the story of David and Amnon', Albeck and Alexander rightly point out that this single reference must be understood in the light of the Tosefta, which mentions two distinct pericopes, namely 'David and Bathsheba' and 'Amnon and Tamar'.¹²³ Mishna and Tosefta agree as far as the former is concerned, which may neither be read nor interpreted, but the Tosefta permits both reading and translating of the pericope of Amnon and Tamar, which the Mishna prohibits. The Bavli confuses the references, however, by listing first 'Amnon and Tamar',¹²⁴ then 'David and Amnon', following the labels of the Tosefta and Mishna respectively, but identifying both pericopes with 2 Sam. 13, thus missing any reference to the story of 'David and Bathsheba'. Here shorthand references caused havoc to proper identification of the pericope involved.

One piece of evidence in this connection has been all but overlooked, possibly due to the common neglect of the *simanim*,¹²⁵ the Talmudic markers of series. As time went by, many of these markers were dropped in manuscript reproduction, to the point that most never made it in the printed editions.¹²⁶ In the middle of b. Meg. 25b both the priestly blessing and the Story of David and Amnon are included under the *siman* for 'read but not interpreted', *רעבד"ן*—which is shorthand for *ראובן עגל ברכת* 'Reuben, [the second account of the Golden] Calf, [Priestly] Blessing, David and Amnon'.¹²⁷ This is noteworthy on two counts. First, the Mishna and Tosefta stipulate that the priestly blessing should not even be read, let alone interpreted. Second, the *siman* includes 'David and Amnon'

that are known to us, and translated in TgJon; – = no ruling is attested. See also Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', pp. 190–91. In contrast to his observations (pp. 181, 186, 190) the 'prohibitions and punishments' are attested in the Tosefta, including ms Vienna (3.31), as is the pericope of the *Merkava* (3.34).

¹²³ Albeck, *סדרי משנה*, I, p. 368; Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', p. 180.

¹²⁴ This pericope is missing in Lon400 and Mun95, but still referred to in the subsequent discussion of 'David and Amnon' as if it were included. Ox23 refers to it by Amnon's name alone. Confusingly, Mun95 refers to 'David and Amnon' by 'Amnon and Tamar', while Lon400 refers to 'Amnon'.

¹²⁵ For further examples, see above, p. 206 n. 119 and p. 477 n. 175 below.

¹²⁶ See E. Segal, *מסורות הנוסח של בבלי מגילה* (PhD dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1981), pp. 103–107.

¹²⁷ So in Vilna (and Pes1516), supported by ColX, TS Fr(2)20, Ena 2075.2, Gött. The *siman* is lacking in Ox23, Mun95, Vat134 and Lon400.

under the passages which are read, although the actual discussion in the subsequent *gemara* of the Vilna edn stipulates that it is not.

The contradiction between the *siman* and the actual discussion is not trivial because it tallies with two important variant readings in the manuscripts of this tractate. Three mss fail to mention the category 'neither read nor interpreted' in the opening of the *gemara* at b. Meg. 25a (see Table 5.3). Indeed, in their subsequent commentary both the priestly blessing and the Story of David and Amnon—the only two complete pericopes in the Tosefta which may not even be read—are classified as 'read but not interpreted';¹²⁸ these manuscripts thus have no passage which is neither read nor interpreted. Hence the two variations in these manuscripts—in the initial taxonomy and in the body of the discussion—agree with the *siman* in the middle that the priestly blessing and the Story of David and Amnon are 'read but not interpreted'. Surprisingly, all manuscripts and editions that preserve the *siman* for the second category invariably include the Story of David and Amnon as 'read but not interpreted' whether or not they label it in this category in the subsequent discussion. The simplest explanation for the incongruity between *siman* and discussion is to assume that later tradents corrected the original categorization after the Mishna and Tosefta into 'neither read nor interpreted', but overlooked the mnemonic marker which still indicated otherwise (see Table 5.3). Thus we find that the Amoraim were inclined to accept the recitation of the priestly blessing—which may be supported by the Mishna, for which some witnesses suggest that the priestly blessing was read but not interpreted—,¹²⁹ and seemingly impervious to the public reading of the story of David's unemblematic behaviour with Bathsheba, which they ignore.

That the list of pericopes consists of heterogeneous traditions which were brought together under a common denominator is apparent from

¹²⁸In the Bavli both in its quotation of the Mishna (see n. 129) and the commentary according to the printed edn, Gött, Mun95, Vati34, Lon400.

¹²⁹See R.N. Rabbincvitz, ספר דקדוקי סופרים (16 vols.; Munich, Mainz and Przemysl: L. Rosenthal, E. Huber and I. Bril, 1866–1888), VIII, p. 129 n. 70. Vilna, MS Mun95 and Bartenura quote the Mishna as if the priestly blessing was 'read but not interpreted' (MS Parma3173 supports MS Kaufman A50 in the traditional reading). It may be worthy of note that MS Vienna of t. Meg. 3.38 lacks the priestly blessing altogether; however, this MS does include the category 'neither read nor interpreted' in reference to David and Bathsheba, so this may reflect a scribal error (so Lieberman, תוספתא כפשוטה, v, pp. 1214, 1220).

Source	neither read– nor interpreted in Taxonomy	read and inter- preted in first siman ¹³¹	David in second siman	David in discussion
Göt	no (= read)	yes	yes = read	read
ColX	yes (= not read)	n/a	yes = read	not read
Mun95	no (= read)	n/a	n/a	read
Vat134	no (= read)	yes	n/a	read
Ox23	yes (= not read)	n/a	n/a	not read
Har	yes (= not read)	n/a	n/a	not read
Enaz075	-	n/a	yes = read	-
Pes1516	yes (= not read)	yes	yes = read	not read
Vilna	yes (= not read)	yes	yes = read	not read
TS1(2)20	yes (= not read)	yes	yes = read	not read

Table 5.3: David and the simanim¹³²

the inclusion of the priestly blessing.¹³⁰ This blessing occurs in the list of pericopes to be ‘said’ in the holy tongue, which involves a context different from the shabbat liturgy and, as Heinemann argues, probably reflects the original context of the rule that the blessing is not ‘read’, since the priests were known to recite it by heart. Thus the priestly blessing was ‘not to be read from manuscript’, but this ruling’s apparent similarity to the pericopes that are not to be read out during the recitation of the Tora in the synagogue service invited the editors to lump all of them together. As the creation of the list thus suddenly suggested a new context for the prohibition to read the priestly blessing, Heinemann suggests, later generations changed the ruling to ‘read but not interpreted’ because

¹³⁰ Heinemann, ברכת כהנים, p. 38.

¹³¹ The first siman reads בלת עקן נשפה סימן. The pericopes of ‘Amnon and Tamar’ and ‘Absalom and his father’s concubines’ are somewhat unusually abbreviated with נ and פ. On the other hand, Lon400 omits the pericope of Amnon and Tamar, while it has the pericope of Absalom and his father’s concubines preceded by that of the concubine in Gibeah, following the canonical order; this might reflect a later improvement.

¹³² Note that ‘David in second siman’ means that the pericope is categorized as ‘read but not interpreted’, whether or not this classification agrees with the subsequent discussion. Furthermore, all witnesses for the Bavli have the priestly blessing as ‘read but not interpreted’. The first siman is not relevant for the categorization, but noted for its rarity. There is, understandably, no siman for the third category.

the prohibition to include the priestly blessing in the Tora-reading was not understood, and more importantly, in contravention of traditional practice. The disagreement spilled over into the textual transmission of the Mishna itself, resulting in two distinct textual versions: one supported by most textual witnesses, claiming that the priestly blessing is ‘neither read nor interpreted’, and another, supported by some versions of the Mishna and many manuscripts of the Bavli, categorizing the blessing as ‘read but not interpreted’.¹³³ The same confusion is tangible in *y. Meg. 4.11(10), 75c*:

ברכות כהנים נקראות ולא מיתרגמות ר' בא בר כהן בעא קומי ר' יוסה מה טע' [אמ']
 ליה] כה תברכו לברכה ניתנה לא ניתנה לקריאה

The Blessings of the Priests are read but not interpreted. R. Ba b. Cohen asked before R. Yose, What is the reason? [He replied to him,] ‘So you will bless’ (Num. 6.23). It was given for the purpose of blessing, not for reading.

After introducing the blessing as a pericope that may be ‘read but not interpreted’, the conclusion suggests it was to be ‘neither read nor interpreted’, as it was not given ‘for reading’. Note that R. Yose’s proof-text is the very text cited time and again to argue for the holy tongue as the language of public reading.¹³⁴ In all probability, R. Yose accepted the public recitation of the priestly blessing as long as it was carried out in Hebrew, but the final confusing comment in the Yerushalmi negates that conclusion.

Apart from the differences between the items and their evaluation on these lists, they have been expanded in the Tosefta and the Bavli. The Tosefta includes two case stories (on ‘Jerusalem’s Abominations’ of Ezek. 16 and the Story of Reuben, 3.34-35) as well as some comments on reading the curses (3.31), on the Second Story of the Golden Calf (3.36-37) and on the Story of David and Bathsheba (3.38). Each of these passages is easily detached from the basic list on which it comments. After a summary statement, the Bavli proceeds to discuss the merits of each case, by and large following the longer list known from the Tosefta, over and against the shorter one in the Mishna. The *stamma* elucidates each item on the list with typical vocabulary (פשיטא מהו דתימא ‘Of course! But what if you had said...’). These metatexts distinguish the Bavli from the Tosefta—not

¹³³Heinemann’s interpretation remains hypothetical, but has the advantage of providing a convincing reason for the occurrence of either rule over alternative explanations, such as wariness of pronouncing the blessing out of context, or the dangers of its translation as in TgPsJ, and others, all of which are discussed by Heinemann.

¹³⁴See *y. Sot. 7.2, 21c*; *b. Sot. 33b; 37b*; *Num. R. 11.4*.

a single one of the Tosefta's comments is attested in the Bavli, or vice versa—yet the Tosefta and the Bavli are still closest to one another in their selection, order, and classification of passages.

All this points to a complicated relationship between the two lists. The lack of any disagreement in reference to the pericope of Jerusalem's abominations suggests that the Mishna's selective redaction suppressed the anonymous voice. Likewise, the canonical ordering is presumably later. If we take out the two pericopes that may be 'read and interpreted' in the Mishna (see Figure 5.1), a different picture emerges, as the Mishna now suddenly appears to follow a taxonomic order: listing first those items that are 'read but not interpreted', then 'neither read nor interpreted' and 'they do not end with the prophetic portion of...'. Why would the Mishna enlist these two, at face value redundant pericopes at this particular position?

The question what the purpose of the category 'read and interpreted' might be is of prime importance for the history of these lists. This category is most conspicuous: why single out a small selection of passages as what would be expected to be the default position? Alexander discerns an earlier stage of the tradition in this 'curious redundant category'.¹³⁵ 'The most satisfactory answer', he suggests, 'is that at an earlier stage these passages were classified in one of the other two categories (i.e. either as "not read and not translated" or as "read but not translated"), and that their present classification marks the reversal of this earlier judgement'. For the Tora-passages, the basic format of the lists was probably 'read but not interpreted'—only ever reading the priestly blessing was challenged—while for the Prophetic portions the lists 'probably considered of a series of passages which could not be used as haphtaroth'. On this interpretation, there is an apparent tendency to greater freedom discernible in these lists. Alexander suggests that the move to lift the ban on translation in each of these instances may have taken place against the background of a well-established liturgy, when 'the Targum was under control, and so the necessity for this sort of restriction was passing away'.¹³⁶

Alexander's hypothesis is particularly attractive for the link it creates between a seemingly redundant category of passages and the history of rabbinic involvement with scriptural translation, illuminating both. Reading against the grain of the text, the notion that the category 'read

¹³⁵Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', p. 181.

¹³⁶Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', pp. 181–82.

and interpreted' reflects—by virtue of its redundancy—a history which it seeks to conceal by promoting the reverse is a classic example of modern hermeneutics. In the statement 'read and interpreted' one or both of its components collapse into their opposites—i.e., 'not read' or 'not interpreted'—so that the statement as a whole collapses into its two antecedents, which are 'read but not interpreted' and 'neither read nor interpreted'. The problem with such readings is that they can often be reverted on the same terms. In this case, it is equally plausible to claim that the apparent redundancy of the class called 'read and interpreted' reflects comparative exercises (why is this passage not interpreted, while a similar one is?) or contemporary challenges to the freedom of reading and translation which are held off by affirming that the very passage may indeed be read and interpreted. On this assumption, the need to affirm the opinion that these passages may, indeed, be read and interpreted does not signal a newly won status of freedom but a confirmation of the status quo, whether or not in the face of mounting opposition.

Moreover, in recent decades our appreciation of the social context of early Judaism has changed considerably, in part as a result of Alexander's own studies. The old view that rabbinic Judaism had won the day by the mid-second century CE has now given way to far more cautious readings of the rabbinic influence on Jewish society during the Tannaitic period. The assumption that any passages were effectively banned from use in the synagogue would require a greater rabbinic influence on and involvement with the synagogue in the Tannaitic period than seems warranted today. We cannot safely assume a well-established practice of oral-performative translation, brought under full control of rabbinic auspices, for which proof simply does not exist.

How do we establish whether or not the Mishna's two cases represent a vestigial category which masks a restriction once imposed on the passages so classified? At issue first of all is whether we can make sense of the Mishna without recourse to a theory of vestigial remains. To state the obvious, to include passages that may be read and interpreted has one glaring explanation. Since the Mishna enlists the second account of the Golden Calf among those not to be interpreted,¹³⁷ it begs the question

¹³⁷The reason why the second story was deemed more problematic is traditionally explained in two ways: R. Hananel (b. Meg. 25b) and Rashi (b. Meg. 25a) suggest that the phrase *וַיֵּצֵא הָעֵגֶל הַזֶּה* in the second account could suggest that the calf had its own

whether the same restriction applies to the first account of the Golden Calf; after all, the accounts are virtually identical. By all accounts, however, this pericope had not come under any restriction. The information is supplied to avoid misunderstanding; that the first account may be ‘read and interpreted’ is an affirmation designed to avoid fallacy—instead of a half-hearted lifting of the ban in a tendency towards greater freedom. Similarly, the positive affirmation that the Story of Tamar (and Yehuda) is ‘read and interpreted’ precludes confusion with the Story of (Amnon and) Tamar (2 Sam. 13), which is ‘neither read nor interpreted’. Both pericopes involve incest, with the females responding to the same name, Tamar; again, the information that one is ‘read and interpreted’ avoids a fallacy. If this co-textual reading is correct, neither statement is redundant, nor is ‘read and interpreted’ a genuine category in the Mishna but a contrastive affirmation in the context of pericopes of similar contents that may not be interpreted. As we observed above, these two pericopes in fact disturb the taxonomic order of the Mishna, suggesting that they may have been added to this chapter at a relatively late stage.

If there is no reason to assume, on the Mishna’s own terms, that ‘read and interpreted’ masks a previous restriction which has now been overturned, what is this header’s *raison d’être* in the Tosefta and the Bavli? The most likely answer is that the collection and designation of these pericopes originated in discussions of those passages that fell under a restriction; they were brought up because they are somehow similar to passages that were not to be interpreted or not to be read. This explanation clearly applies to those pericopes dealing with immoral sexual conduct. Two of the additional pericopes are thematically linked to the story of Reuben (‘read but not interpreted’) and of David and Bathsheba (‘neither read nor interpreted’): the narratives of Lot and his daughters (Gen. 19) and of Absalom and his father’s concubines (2 Sam. 16).¹³⁸ These pericopes share the immorality of incest with the story of Yehuda and Tamar, listed by both Tosefta and Mishna as ‘read and interpreted’—but contrasted

existence and will. However, the Tosafot and Rif believe that this account has only Aaron in focus, whereas the first account related the incident to all of Israel. Thus the passage might have been deemed disrespectful of one of the fathers—one of the prime factors for ruling a passage out. Cf. Alexander, ‘The Rabbinic Lists’, pp. 184–85.

¹³⁸ Moreover, the pericope of the concubine at Gibeah (Jud. 19), while not dealing with incest, does relate a horrendous story of sexual-violent conduct. For Lot, cf. Gen. R. 51.9.

with Reuben's story in the Mishna—and with the pericope of Amnon and Tamar, which the Tosefta lists as 'read and interpreted', whereas the Mishna does not even allow its inclusion as a *haftara*. Each of the pericopes clearly evoked a sensitivity to ancestral misdemeanours, prompting the question whether they should not be suppressed in the oral-performative translation, or altogether in case of prophetic lectionaries. In another way, the same feelings lie behind the tendency to excuse the fathers for their missteps in the Midrashim and Targumim,¹³⁹ even though such exonerating exposition was not universally endorsed. The opinion of R. Shimon b. Eleazar in t. Meg. 3.37, and the Yerushalmi in its first comment, argue against whitewashing. This follows m. Meg. 4.9, המכנה אותו בשתקן ב'עריית משתקן' 'He who uses euphemisms in the pericope of the prohibited relationships [Lev. 18]—they silence him'.

The two esoterically charged passages of the Work of Creation and the Work of the Chariot—'read and interpreted' in the Tosefta—are mentioned in one breath with the forbidden sexual relationships in m. Hag. 2.1. Mystical speculation about the מעשה בראשית, the Creation Story and מעשה מרכבה, the Chariot of Ezek. 1 has been attributed to the early Tannaim, but it is unclear how reliable the attributions are, of which character the speculation was and how grave a danger mystical speculation posed in the second century CE. References to the 'four who entered Paradise' (b. Hag. 14b) appear to instil new meaning into an older, exegetically orientated Tannaitic tradition, as Schäfer argues,¹⁴⁰ but whether—or when and to whom—the tradition reflects the study of Gnosticism, mystical experience, or exposition of the Work of Creation and the Work of the Chariot is still a matter of debate.¹⁴¹ That these controversial chapters were imbued with special meaning by the early Amoraic period is beyond doubt: there is

¹³⁹L. Díez Merino, 'Exculpación–inculpación: Principios de exegesis targúmica desconocido en la hermenéutica judía oficial', in J. Carrera das Neves, V. Collado Bertomeu and V. Vilar Hueso (eds.), III. Simposio Bíblico Español (I Luso–Espanhol) (Valencia and Lisboa: Fundación Bíblica Español, 1991), pp. 441–76.

¹⁴⁰P. Schäfer, 'New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and Merkavah Mysticism', JJS 35 (1984), pp. 19–35; the preceding *baraita* about R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkay and R. Eleazar b. Arakh is hardly genuinely Tannaitic either.

¹⁴¹See e.g., C.R.A. Morray-Jones, 'Paradise Revisited (2 Cor. 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate', in HTR 86 (1993), pp. 177–217, 265–92; A. Goshen-Gottstein, 'Four Entered Paradise Revisited', HTR 88 (1995), pp. 69–133; P.S. Alexander, 'Comparing Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism', JJS 35 (1984), pp. 1–18; M.A. Sweeney,

independent corroboration for the reticence to teach these chapters by the early third century CE in the form of Origen's commentary to Canticles.¹⁴² Their inclusion in the discussion about what may and may not be read or interpreted signals a concern, whether exegetical or mystical, but not necessarily a previous restriction to either read or interpret these texts—with due distinction made between the oral-performative translation, with the danger that euphemisms were used, and midrashic exposition as envisaged in b. Hag. 11b.¹⁴³ The Tosefta permits the recitation of Ezek. 1, and may have bolstered its opinion by the reference to the Work of Creation—which by virtue of belonging to the Tora was always likely to be read in public. The Mishna prohibits its inclusion among the *haftarot* (with the exception of R. Yehuda), and may therefore not have been interested in mentioning the Work of Creation.

Two pericopes in the Tosefta are not mentioned for their esoteric or unpalatable character among those pericopes that may be read and interpreted: the Blessings and the Curses (Deut. 27) and Prohibitions and Penalties. Why either of these might have been an issue is not entirely clear, although it is fair to assume that the first pericope evoked a sensitivity to pronouncing curses in public, lest they would be effectual. However, this pericope may simply have been added to this discussion from elsewhere: in m. Sot. 7 the blessings and the curses are listed among the pericopes to be said (!) in the holy tongue, excluding translations. Although this latter discussion would bear closer similarity to the category 'read but not interpreted', the context of both lists differs:¹⁴⁴ m. Sot. 7 discusses certain rituals without reference to the weekly shabbat service, whereas t. Meg. 3 refers to the lectionaries. But the conflation possibly led to confusion: MS Mun95 includes this pericope in the series of 'read and interpreted', but unexpectedly qualifies this pericope as *נקראין ואין מתרגמין* 'read but not interpreted'. The exact passages intended with Prohibitions and Penalties remain in the dark (t. Meg. 3.31; b. Meg. 25b). It was generally taken for

'Pardes Revisited Once Again: A Reassessment of the Rabbinic Legend Concerning the Four Who Entered Pardes', *Shofar* 22.4 (2004), pp. 43–56.

¹⁴²The reticence in teaching these two texts to Jewish boys, as Origen reports, is an important independent witness that there was some concern about mystical speculation; see Origen's Prologue to his commentary on Canticles as quoted by Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', p. 183.

¹⁴³For the distinction, see Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', p. 185 n. 18.

¹⁴⁴Note the difference between *נאמרים* (m. Sot. 7.2) and *נקראין* (m. Meg. 4.10).

granted where any of the passages in these lists begin and end, although clarification is sometimes required.¹⁴⁵ Since the exact identification of the prohibitions and penalties is left open, while they do not constitute a continuous passage, they may well have been grouped loosely together to establish a principle. The *gemara* suggests that people might take heed only out of 'love and fear',¹⁴⁶ thus for ulterior motives, not for the sake of Heaven.

How does the shorter list of the Mishna ultimately relate to that of the *Tosefta* and the *Bavli*, and more acutely, how to account for the Mishna's silence about the six additional passages found in *Tosefta* and *Bavli*? The bare lists themselves, by their very nature, do not elaborate on the reasons why one might be interpreted and the other might not. But it stands to reason that the academic discussions of borderline cases accompanied the creation of these lists, with those labelled 'read and interpreted' only included to avoid fallacies, discuss borderline cases, or bolster current opinions. Thus the six additional passages classified as 'read and interpreted' in the *Tosefta* do not signal a lessening of previous restrictions; by contrast, once we consider the relationship between the Mishna and the *Tosefta* more closely, the opposite tendency is more likely, in which the *Tosefta* preserves an older leniency. The Mishna would seem to preserve an older stage to the tradition in the wording *אין מפטירין ב* 'they do not end with the prophetic lection of...'. The pericopes in the *Tora* have in common that they may be read as part of the weekly lectionaries; the question is whether they might also be interpreted. But the prophetic pericopes would not necessarily be read at all; the Mishnaic terminology therefore seems to be original in this respect. However, the Mishna itself adopts the terminology of the *Tosefta* for two other prophetic pericopes, the *Merkavah* and Jerusalem's Abominations, and thereby reflects editorial

¹⁴⁵Debate went on about the verses which make up the Second Story of the Golden Calf: Exod. 32.21-25, 32.22-25, or up to 35 (from either 21 or 22); see t. Meg. 3.36. The end is illustrated in y. Meg. 4.10, 75c: 'R. Aha in the name of R. Ba, "And the LORD wiped off the people [=TgOnq] for what they did with the calf that Aaron made" [=MT] (Exod. 32.35)'. The Story of Reuben was limited to the first half of Gen. 35.22 (up to the *Petuḥa*) in t. Meg. 3.35 and b. Meg. 25b, but extended to include Gen. 49.4 in the Masora to Targum Onqelos; M.L. Klein, *The Masorah to Targum Onqelos* (Binghamton: Global Publications, 2000), p. 92.

¹⁴⁶Reading *מיראה ומאבה* according to mss Mun95, Lon400 (and Rashi); or *מיראה ומאבה* according to Vat134. Gött supports the Vilna edn. Note, however, that Mun95 and Rashi switch the reasons given elsewhere for the Blessings and the Curses on the one hand and the Prohibitions and Penalties on the other.

activity. Selecting only a minority view for the pericope of *הודע את ירושלים* 'Cause Jerusalem to know' purposely silences the majority view, which, as the Tosefta indicates, allowed this pericope to be read.¹⁴⁷ Finally, the canonical order in the Mishna—with two pericopes that are classified as 'read and interpreted' by way of commentary on two that are not—similarly points to editorial activity. Against this background, the Mishna appears to have added restrictions not previously *en vogue*: excluding Ezek. 1 and 16 from the prophetic lectionaries.

If the targumic manuscripts are anything to go by, there was a development towards further restrictions on oral-performative translation rather than in the direction of greater freedom. Certain verses have indeed been left untranslated in targumic manuscripts, but, conspicuously, the practice, with or without the Masoretic note *בציבורא לא מתרגם* 'not to be translated in public',¹⁴⁸ was extended to additional pentateuchal and prophetic passages not included in any of these lists: Exod. 12.33; 17.11; 20.23, 26; Jud. 10.16; Ezek. 1.26 (a list which may not be exhaustive). Klein suggests that pious copyists had their hand in this extension, and it is striking indeed that some substitutions occur in prophetic portions that were probably never part of any lectionary cycle. In any case, the manuscript evidence does not support a shift to greater leniency, even if the eight passages deemed 'translatable' in the Tosefta and Bavli are indeed translated according to the Targumim and the Masora to Onqelos.

Unsurprisingly, as Alexander and Klein have pointed out, the manuscripts of Targum Onqelos and Targum Neofiti contain readings which confirm the rabbinic lists. For the two passages in the Tora that may be 'read but not interpreted', the Story of Reuben and the Second Account of the Golden Calf, the Masora to Targum Onqelos has the entry *לא מיתרגם* [גם] 'not to be interpreted in public',¹⁴⁹ which agrees with interlinear

¹⁴⁷The reason why this pericope may have been deemed unsuitable could well be the sensitive nature of this chapter, which, as Alexander points out, was used in Christian polemics against Judaism; Alexander, 'The Rabbinic Lists', p. 186.

¹⁴⁸Berliner, Targum Onkelos, vol. 2, p. 218; Klein, 'Not to be Translated in Public', pp. 80–91. For Jud. 10.16, see Smelik, Targum of Judges, pp. 538–41; for Ezek. 1.26, where *כמראה אדם* was left untranslated in many MSS, see Kimhi's commentary.

¹⁴⁹Or a variant of the formula; see Klein, *The Masorah*, pp. 78, 136; Klein, 'Not to be Translated', pp. 80–91. See also G.E. Weill, 'La Massorah Magna du Targum du Pentateuque: Nouveaux fragments et autres', *Textus* 4 (1964), pp. 30–54 (45–48, 50–51).

notes in Codex Neofiti.¹⁵⁰ As for the priestly blessing, Targum Neofiti does not translate the blessing but offers the Hebrew text instead.¹⁵¹ In some manuscripts of Onqelos, the priestly blessing is left untranslated, either by omitting the Aramaic verses or by reproducing the Hebrew blessing in lieu of the Aramaic,¹⁵² in obvious conformance with the ruling. One masoretic note indicates that certain written translations may be provided even though in public they are to be omitted.¹⁵³ In bilingual manuscripts, the Hebrew may have been copied out twice. The inclusion of Num. 6.24-26 in Hebrew before the actual translation in the single extant manuscript of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan—which is not a bilingual ms, apart from the Hebrew lemmata that signal the Hebrew verses—suggests conformity with the ruling ‘read but not interpreted’, despite the inclusion of a translation.

5.4 Conclusions

In Late Antiquity, the public recitation of the Bible was an important aspect of the synagogue service. Rabbinic literature imposes a rather uniform and detailed practice of translation on local communities, both to render the biblical text intelligible and to distinguish the Tora from its interpretation. Whether these rules reflect the practice of bilingual reading in the second and third century CE, remains unproven. But it must be regarded as highly unlikely that the regularization of public translation took place before the Usha-period, if only because of the enormous diversity of linguistic competence in Palestine before the main centre of Judaism was localized in Galilee. The allowance made for written Greek translations attests to the needs of Jews in the Hellenistic cities. The bilingual Hebrew/Aramaic recitation only made sense in post-Bar Kokhba Palestine and the Babylonian Diaspora, but the practice of monolingual Greek recitation smouldered for a long time afterwards.

The rabbis attempted to regularize the use of translations by careful prescriptions of their proper performance, which made the translation dependent on and subservient to the Hebrew source text, by declaring the oral-performative translation an optional component of the service

¹⁵⁰The latter was noted by Alexander, ‘The Rabbinic Lists’, pp. 187–88.

¹⁵¹Alexander, ‘The Rabbinic Lists’, p. 188.

¹⁵²So also FragTg^v Gen. 35.22. See Klein, ‘Not to be Translated’, pp. 80–91.

¹⁵³Weill, ‘La Massorah Magna’, p. 45.

and finally by placing certain restrictions on the selection of passages to be included in translation. Such restrictions were not lifted as a result of presumed rabbinic control over the practice of translation, but rather reinforced, as the redaction of the Mishna and the evidence of the targumic manuscripts suggest.

The careful distinction between the written text and its oral interpretation is the ingenious resolution of the opposition to translation against the background of the diverse language situation and actual practice. Together these stipulations framed the translation as a counterpoint to the Hebrew recitation, steering the interpretation where necessary by either subtle or more conspicuous changes and supplements vis à vis the Hebrew. The second voice repeated the first in a different language, simultaneously providing a running commentary on the first voice. All this resulted in an antiphonal recitation which reflects rabbinic regulations dating from the Usha-period. It is doubtful, however, whether this practice was widespread before the middle of the second century CE or reflected common practice even in the rabbinic heartland, let alone the Diaspora.

Between Holy Writ and Oral Tora

Rabbinic views on scriptural translation vary according to provenance, period and purpose—rather than being uniform and monolithic. The existence of variation which I will argue here does not come as a surprise against the background, detailed in the chapters above, of varied ideas about language use, the rising prominence of Hebrew, a difference in translational terminology and a variety of practices in chanting the Scriptures. The differences in the rabbinic views on translation relate to an opposition to Aramaic scriptural translations among Palestinian rabbis, a rising wariness of written Greek versions among many rabbis, the promulgation of the Targums as Oral Tora and, finally, the standardization of Aramaic translations in Babylonia.¹ But these differences are most palpable in the rabbinic reminiscences of their status as Oral Tora. In this chapter I will focus on the orality of the translations—when, how and why the rabbis were promoting the cause of Targums as Oral Tora while divorcing *targum* from the Holy Writ.

To understand the perspective on *targum* in early rabbinic documents, I will first provide a brief and generic introduction about the necessarily oral aspects of rabbinic culture before I focus on *targum* as Oral Tora. Among these aspects, the variety and tension between fixed and fluid compositions will receive special attention. Next I will turn to the perspective on *targum* as Holy Writ, which is all but lost in contemporary scholarship, because it sheds a contrastive light on the boundaries of the Oral Tora and the Written Tora and ultimately on the reasons for the ideas on targumic orality which the rabbinic documents project.

¹For the former two observations, see Chs. Seven and Eight, as well as Ch. Five.

6.1 The oral circulation of texts

The significance of oral performance for the composition and transmission of Ancient Near Eastern texts has long been recognized.² Few people were literate and manuscripts were expensive. Since silent reading was rare and reading aloud the rule,³ the reception of texts involved the melodious recitation of a written text by a literate reader, to whom the non-literate audience would listen. The melody would help project the reader's voice and facilitate memorization.⁴

There are indications in rabbinic literature that the number of people who could do this was sparse. In certain synagogues, only a single person was able to read the Tora or the Hallel (t. Meg. 3.12; t. Pes. 10.8). The ruling that the Tora was to be read on market days, when inhabitants of 'satellite' villages would visit the 'mother' town, may also reflect the unavailability of either rare and costly manuscripts or competent readers in rural synagogues.⁵ Similarly, when Mishna and Tosefta allow children to read (whilst avoiding the situation that an adult would translate; t. Meg. 3.21) their leniency appears to address a dearth of readers. Jewish literacy in Late Antiquity may not have amounted to more than a tenth of the population, probably less.⁶ In the nature of things, such estimates are open to discussion. Perhaps a more contextual estimate for men attending the synagogue may have been slightly higher, yet eye diseases, so common in the Ancient Near East as attested in ancient medicine, would have affected the eyesight of local literates as well as illiterates. In any case, it is clear that the vast majority of Jews would not have been able to read a complex literary text such as the Tanakh. To recite the Scriptures, deciphering the

²Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, pp. 9–26; Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*; Elman and Gershoni, *Transmitting Jewish Traditions*; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*; E.S. Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³H. Blanck, *Das Buch in der Antike* (München: C.H. Beck, 1992), p. 71; C. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ, 81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 461.

⁴Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, pp. 163–64.

⁵Cf. *Sifre Deut.* 301.

⁶See Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, p. 496. See also S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, p. 10; M. Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy as Reflected in the Halakhot Concerning the Reading of the Scroll of Esther and the Hallel', *PAAJR* 54 (1987), pp. 1–12 (11); M. Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.', in S. Fishbane (ed.), *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society* 2 (Hoboken: Ktav, 1992), pp. 46–61 (54).

letters was not enough. The Hebrew Tora had neither vowels to assist the reader, nor accentuation to mark melody and interpunction. Accordingly, the majority of illiterate and semi-literate Jews under Graeco-Roman rule would familiarize themselves with the Tora by listening to its public recitation in the synagogue by a literate and trained peer, either in Hebrew or in translation. The Tora was known in its oral-performative Gestalt.⁷

The oral format of reading is only half the story: as a repeated action, reading implies that the text would already have been familiar and known, interpreted and stored. Audiences who heard the text before would have had some sort of memory of it. In learned circles, familiarity with the text was a prerequisite. The importance of fore-knowledge for the rabbinic act of interpretation emerges from the brief way in which the interpreted text is quoted: *a word is enough to the wise*. Their memories were trained; they had to be. Without chapter and verse numbering, as introduced by Archbishop Stephen Langton from Canterbury in the thirteenth century CE and rapidly adopted in both Christian and Jewish circles, references were not easy to find. Written texts were not always available. If they were, the scrolls had to be rolled back and forth to find any given passage, which did not make them suitable for quick consultation. This difficulty of looking up a particular passage did not vary between scrolls containing individual books of the Tora, *חומשין*, or *ספרים* (the individual books were about the maximum a papyrus scroll could contain).⁸ The codex made referencing far easier, but seems to have come into use among Jewish circles only after the Arab conquest, with a possible exception for a non-Biblical text in Greek.⁹

Thus all who wanted to participate in any study or debate would need a memorized version of the Tora, but the ability to quote any given biblical verse is only a first requirement for following the intricacies of rabbinic discussions. A student or scholar would also need a thorough knowledge of traditional exegesis, as well as halakhic concepts and terminology. While sages quoted from a vast array of traditions, they selected those parts which were useful for their arguments. In many instances, a quotation is not

⁷Bowker, *The Targums*, p. 12.

⁸A. Spiro, 'Samaritans, Tobiads, and Judahites in Pseudo-Philo', *PAAJR* 20 (1951), pp. 279–355 (284). The complete Tora and its individual books were considered to be of equal sanctity in *y. Meg.* 3.1, 74a: *תורה וחומשין קדושה אחת הן*.

⁹Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, p. 136; Van der Horst, 'Neglected Greek Evidence'.

just brief, the part relevant to the topic under discussion is frequently not quoted at all but has to be supplemented to make sense of the argument. While it is possible to explain this in terms of reduction, which took place during a long process of composition and redaction, it is questionable whether such textual ellipsis follows from the diachronic nature of the texts. Indeed, the brevity of quotations appears to be a characteristic of all stages of the texts. The quotation evokes the crucial passage by citing its first words (such as the beginning of a speech report) without necessarily always supplementing what follows.¹⁰ Without chapter and verse, the beginning of a passage is a natural point of reference that evoked more than just its beginning.

The discussions and interpretations did not constitute a commentary on the Bible, as they would have had they taken their cue from biblical verses and followed the scriptural order of appearance; rather, the discussions and interpretations follow their own logic (which includes association) and this logic determines the selection of scriptural quotations, rather than vice versa. So the Tora would circulate, as would its interpretation, and interpretative traditions and motifs lent themselves to be reused in new discursive contexts. As a result certain motifs are differently deployed in the same or in distinct documents, and sometimes couched in different languages.¹¹ The original context of such traditions may or may not play any part in its new instantiation. The numerous traditions about Adam the First may once have been informed by anti-Gnostic sentiments, as is commonly believed, but those sentiments did not necessarily influence new ways of marshalling these traditions to make a different and new point. A contextual analysis will reveal different interests and focuses.¹²

At the level of the composition, most works were not authored by single individuals but represent something of a collective enterprise. Compiling, editing and accumulation often took place in successive stages, in which the distinction between authors and editors is blurred. The anonymous voice cannot be equated to a single author. The Bavli has no single author, with the identity of its editors unknown, hence their academic nickname *stammaim*: 'anonymous ones'. But the material extent of their work, the beginning and end of their activity remain subject

¹⁰ See Isa. 8.6 in b. San. 94b, discussed below in section 8.2, p. 358.

¹¹ For two examples, see p. 163 n. 70 above and p. 476 (section 9.5) below.

¹² S. Niditch, 'Cosmic Man as Mediator in Rabbinic Literature', *JJS* 34 (1983), pp. 137–46.

to debate.¹³ What does emerge from the material evidence at hand is a relatively fluid state of affairs. Units of texts may be recycled over and again, realigned, reinterpreted. Even after works more or less appear in completed form, scribes evidently felt free to supplement existing texts, change their wording, or rearrange their units. Such a morphology of texts points to a different attitude to textuality than those assumed on the basis of modern, Western literary models, in particular as regards the fixed nature of compositions. Indeed, the study of rabbinic orality received a strong impetus from the study of non-Jewish oral cultures,¹⁴ which were shown to regard textual fidelity in starkly different ways from purely written cultures. In contrast to modern conceptions of textual reproduction in the world of printed texts, purely oral literature tends to reconstruct a text in performance without ever aiming at a literal reproduction of some fixed exemplar.

Drawing away from a too starkly drawn contrast between orality and literacy, recent studies have emphasized the interface of oral and written textuality and changed the perspective on rabbinic textuality. The written text no longer appears in isolation from the oral performance, which may both precede and follow it.¹⁵ In textual criticism, there are profound consequences from these new insights. Purely written models of textuality do not fit the classical rabbinic sources. In point of fact, the character of variant readings in the literary traditions confirmed the necessity to rethink textual models. Scholars increasingly focused on textual fluidity, to which the traditional discipline of textual criticism, based as it was on models derived from biblical studies, could not always do justice.¹⁶

¹³See R.L. Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), and the literature cited therein. For recent developments, see R. Brody, סתם התלמוד ודברי האמוראים, in B.J. Schwartz, A. Shemesh and A. Melamed (eds.), איגוד; מבחר מאמרים במדעי היהדות. כרך א: המקרא ועולמו, ספרות חז"ל ומשפט עברי ומחשבת ישראל (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2009), pp. 213–32.

¹⁴Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*; Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*.

¹⁵Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, p. 19.

¹⁶See M. Beit-Arié, 'Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical Inferences' and P.S. Alexander, 'Textual Criticism and Rabbinic Literature: the Case of the Targum of Song of Songs', both in P.S. Alexander and A. Samely (eds.), *Artefact and Text: The Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts. Proceedings of a Conference held in the University of Manchester 28–30 April 1992* (=BJRL 75 [1993]; Manchester: John Rylands University Library, 1994), pp. 33–51, 159–73; P. Mandel, *Midrash Lamentations Rabbati: Prolegomenon, and a Critical Edition to the Third Parasha* (Unpublished PhD

Rabbinic texts showed a remarkable 'open' character, which transcends the distinction between composition and transmission.

6.2 The construction of targum as Oral Torah

Beyond the oral dissemination of texts, and the requirements of memory and discursive intelligence, the orality of rabbinic culture became itself a focal point of rabbinic interest. Oral lore existed for centuries, yet the conceptualization of rabbinic oral traditions as Oral Torah emerges during the rabbinic period, in particular during the early Amoraic period.¹⁷ What happened to have been largely oral knowledge eventually evolved into something that should remain oral and somehow distinct from written traditions. This distinction the rabbis captured in the notions of the Oral and the Written Torah, with the latter representing the Tanakh, which is written, and the former rabbinic knowledge for which an oral origin was postulated. In the process they aligned targum with the Oral Torah.

That scriptural translations fit into this scheme seems obvious. Sages subordinated the practice of Targum to the recitation of the Hebrew Bible by promulgating the oral-performative translation, which had to be kept apart from the Written Torah. The performance of the translation in the synagogue service was carefully orchestrated: it had to play second fiddle to the recitation of the Torah and be performed without recourse to a written text. That targum is Oral Torah follows from its strictly oral delivery in the synagogue. It comes as no surprise, then, that the status of Targum as part and parcel of the Oral Torah has always been taken for granted. There

thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997); Mandel, 'Between Byzantium and Islam'; Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah*; L.M. Teugels, 'Textual Criticism of a Late Rabbinic Midrash: *Aggadat Bereshit*', in L.M. Teugels and R. Ulmer (eds.), *Recent Developments in Midrash Research* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2005), pp. 137–53. Cf. Ch. Milikowsky, 'The Status Quaestionis of Research in Rabbinic Literature', *JJS* 39 (1988), pp. 201–11.

¹⁷S.D. Fraade, 'Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim', *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999), pp. 33–51; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*. See also J. Neusner, 'The Written Tradition in the pre-Rabbinic Period', *JSJ* 4 (1973), pp. 56–65; S. Safrai, 'Oral Torah', in S. Safrai (ed.), *The Literature of the Sages*, 1 (CRINT, 2/3; Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 35–119; P. Schäfer, 'Das "Dogma" von der mündlichen Torah im rabbinischen Judentum', in P. Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums* (AGSU, 15; Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 153–97; A. Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 116–40.

is, however, far more to the notion of the Oral Tora than its oral mode of dissemination. Moreover, to the mode of *targum* as Oral Tora there is an obverse mode of *targum* as Holy Writ, one which was to disappear altogether in rabbinic thought, so much so that its existence has rarely been acknowledged even in modern scholarship.

Before I turn to the specific place of *targum* in the twofold revelation of the Tora, a few words will be helpful on the rabbinic views of the two Torot and their interdependence. The Written Tora refers to the Hebrew Pentateuch in its bare, unpointed form, which was considered to be a sacred, immutable, God-given text.¹⁸ To a great extent its text was conceived of as a code to be interpreted by its receptors. The appropriation, interpretation and application of this code had been entrusted to the rabbis, who enjoyed a relatively large degree of autonomy in their interpretative efforts. According to a well-known story even God listened to the sages for illumination of halakhic matters and historical issues (b. Git. 6b). The interpretative tradition that surrounds the Written Tora is understood to make up the Oral Tora. Indeed, the Oral Tora actualizes the interpretative richness of the Written Tora, and, as such, it has often been viewed as the halakhic mediation of the Written Tora to the social realities of the rabbis, which stood apart as an evolving, not necessarily fixed, tradition that was to accompany the perennial, unchangeable Tora.

That is one side of the story. However, our sources do not uniformly describe the Oral Tora, since a less dynamic, more static view than that of an ongoing interpretation is also present. For the Oral Tora has its roots in the twofold revelation at Mt Sinai, where Moses received not only the Written Tora but also 'its *halakhot*, details and explanations'.¹⁹ These were handed down the generations in an unbroken and oral chain of transmission, famously expressed in the first chapter of tractate Avot. As a parallel source of knowledge, the Oral Tora accordingly appears to be as discrete and fixed a body of information as the Written Tora. Indeed, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, an immaculate bearer of tradition, has famously been likened to a cistern that does not lose a drop (m. Av. 2.8), which tallies

¹⁸A. Goldberg, 'The Rabbinic View of Scripture', in P. Davies and R. White (eds.), *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (JSOTSup, 100; Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp. 153–66. See also the instructive quotation from Gikatilla in Yadin, *Scripture as Logos*, p. 9.

¹⁹*Sifra* בחקתי 8.12–13 (edn Weiss 112c); see Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, p. 91.

with his portrayal as someone who stubbornly stuck to the traditions he had received from his ancestors rather than any innovations.²⁰ In contrast to the far more fluid view of the Oral Torah as an open-ended process of interpretation, here the Oral Torah comes into sight as a fixed tradition. This contrast between fixed and fluid tradition is also relevant for the rabbinic use for *targum* (see section 6.4 below).

Nevertheless, the Amoraim placed more premium on the oral origin and medium of the Oral Torah than an understanding of Oral Torah as either fixed or unfolding ancestral tradition conveys.²¹ Although often seen to be liaising with the Written Torah, sometimes retrospectively, at other times the Oral Torah stands as an independent, parallel source of divine origin which does not always relate the *halakha* explicitly to the Torah—as the Mishna famously fails to do for the majority of its halakhic statements. That is no coincidence. The rabbinic utterances that make up most of the Oral Torah come in the format of quotations of what named or groups of rabbis said or say, which present these rabbis as a source of Torah. A source which is neither at variance with the Written Torah nor identical with it. In their appropriation of the oral tradition and the Written Torah, these rabbis embody the Oral Torah. All the quotations of oral expressions do not just state that the tradition is transmitted orally, but also present the rabbis as the masters of Torah: ‘It is not in heaven’ (Deut. 30.12), for interpretative authority resides with the rabbis.²² Hence the careful tracing of halakhic utterances to specific rabbinic protagonists, because the statements require authenticity.

What distinguishes Oral Torah, then, is not simply its presumed orality but the rabbinic preference for oral-performative education. In one of the more fruitful perspectives on the rabbinic understanding of orality, Martin Jaffee infers from recent studies of orality in general and the framework of Graeco-Roman orality and education in particular that the oral-performative culture of Palestinian Judaism fitted into the common, contemporary pattern of educational culture.²³ Oral tutelage conveys

²⁰ See b. Ber. 27b; b. Yom. 66b; b. Suk. 27b–28a; b. Hag. 3b; b. San. 68a; ARN A 25 (edn Schechter p. 81).

²¹ Fraade, ‘Literary Composition and Oral Performance’, p. 41.

²² D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 34–36.

²³ Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*; Fraade, ‘Literary Composition and Oral Performance’; Alexander, ‘“Homer the Prophet of All”’, pp. 127–42.

knowledge in ways that scribal transmission cannot. The resulting rabbinic emphasis on orality concerns the transmission of knowledge rather than the preservation of text. Hence sages embrace the Oral Tora regardless of the existence, if any, of written texts of the very same tradition. This observation squares with the co-existence of written and oral texts (which does not preclude exclusive reliance on oral text among the rabbinic elite).²⁴

The categorical distinction between Oral and Written Tora, developed by circles around the Palestinian *amora* R. Yoḥanan, carries polemical overtones in those texts which explicitly apply the status of Oral Tora to the Targum.²⁵ To explore the connotations of the translation as Oral Tora, one passage will suffice (TanB. וירא 6). To appreciate its argument, I will quote the passage at length:

וה' אמר המכסה אני מאברהם ילמדנו רבינו מי שהוא מתרגם לקורא בתורה מהו שיסתכל בכתב כך שנו רבותינו המתרגם אסור להסתכל בכתב והקורא אסור ליתן עינו חוץ מן התורה שלא ניתנה התורה אלא בכתב שנאמר וכתבתי על הלוחות ואסור למתרגם ברבים להסתכל בתורה אמר ר' יהודה בן פזי מקרא מלא הוא כתב לך את הדברים האלה הרי המקרא שנתנה בכתב כי על פי הדברים האלה הרי התרגום שניתן בעל פה אמר ר' יהודה בר סימון כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל על ידי כתב ועל ידי פה כי על פי הדברים האלה אם קיימתה מה שבכתב בכתב ומה שבעל פה על פה כרתי אתך ואם שניתה מה שבעל פה בכתב ומה שבכתב בעל פה לא כרתי אתך אמר ר' יהודה הלוי ב"ר שלום בקש משה שתהא אף המשנה בכתב וצפה הקב"ה על שעתידין אומות העולם לתרגם את התורה ולקרות אותה יונית והן אומרין אף אנו ישראל א"ל הקב"ה אכתוב לך רובי תורתך ואם כן כמו זר נחשבו וכל כך למה אלא שהמשנה מסטורן שלו של הקב"ה ואין הקב"ה מגלה מסטורן שלו אלא לצדיקים שנאמר סוד ה' ליראיו וכן אתה מוצא אפילו בשעה שהקב"ה כעס על סדום מפני מעשיהם הרעים ובקש הקב"ה להפוך את סדום לא חתם הקב"ה גזר דינם עד שנמלך באברהם וה' אמר המכסה אני מאברהם

[1] Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham [what I am about to do]?' (Gen. 18.7).

[2] May our master instruct us: Whoever interprets for someone who recites the Tora, may he look at a written text? Thus our masters taught, The interpreter is forbidden to look at a written text and the reader is forbidden

²⁴See E.S. Alexander, 'The Orality of Rabbinic Writing', in C.E. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 38–57.

²⁵Pes. R. 5.1; y. Meg. 4.1, 74d; TanB. לך לך 6; Tan. וירא 5; תשא 34; Exod. R. 47.1. Cf. y. Pea 2.6, 17a; b. Tem. 14b; b. Git. 60b. See Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*.

to glance away from the Tora since the Tora was given only in writing, as it is written, 'And I will write upon the tablets' (Exod. 34.1). And the public interpreter is forbidden to look at the Tora.

- [3] Said R. Yehuda b. Pazzi, 'There is a text which explicitly proves [this], 'Write down these words' (Exod. 34.27)', thus the scripture was given in writing, 'For these words are by mouth' (Ibidem), there the translation, which is given by word of mouth.
- [4] Said R. Yehuda b. Simon, 'I make a covenant with you and with Israel' (Ibidem), in writing and orally, 'For these words are by mouth' (Ibidem). If you maintain in writing what is in writing, and oral what is oral, I will make a covenant with you. But if you change what is oral into writing, or what is in writing into oral [literature], I will not make a covenant with you.
- [5] Said R. Yehuda b. R. Shallum the Levite, 'Moses wanted the Mishna also to be in writing, but the Holy One foresaw that the nations of the world would translate the Tora, read it in Greek, and would say, We too are Israel. The Holy One blessed be He said to him, 'I will write for you the majority of my laws' (Hos. 8.12), hence [what I do not write down] 'will be regarded as esoteric' (Hos. 8.12),²⁶ and all this because the Mishna is the mystery of the Holy One blessed be He, and the Holy One blessed be He will only reveal his mystery to the righteous, as it is said, "The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him [to them He makes known His covenant]" (Ps. 25.14).
- [6] Hence you find that even when the Holy One blessed be He is infuriated by Sodom because of its evil deeds, and when he sought to overturn Sodom, He did not seal the decree of their sentence until he had taken counsel with Abraham, 'Shall I hide from Abraham [what I am about to do?]' (Gen. 18.7).

In this unit two notions are welded together. The first comments [units 2-3] relate to the rabbinic view of Scripture and translation as recitation and its antiphon, emphasizing the distinction between written source text and oral target text. The polarity of Scripture and *targum*, which is common as we have seen,²⁷ is placed on a footing with the polarity of Written and Oral Tora in the following units [4-5]. The translation is thus firmly placed within the realm of the Oral Tora, with sharp rather than fuzzy

²⁶Lit. 'strange', but in the present context 'strange' is related to what is hidden and 'mystery', hence my translation with 'esoteric'.

²⁷See above, p. 173 n. 7.

borders. Even the context of the oral-performative translation in public (מתרגם ברבים) does not leave the door open for a written process of textual transmission outside the synagogue service, since a change in the mode of textual transmission from oral to written or vice versa is firmly rejected as a flagrant violation of the terms of the covenant in [4], to be further developed in [5].

The framework of this unit also suggests translations are not to be written. Although admitting that written translations exist, no good comes of it following [4-5]. Note that the Greek translation is deemed to have been authored by these nations themselves, rather than Israel, which negates even the possibility of a Jewish Greek translation in writing, entirely in keeping with its status as Oral Tora. In [5], R. Yehuda b. R. Shallum relates the written Greek Tora to the nations that claim the title of Israel for themselves. A strong apologetic motif manifests itself here, translated into the necessity of keeping part of the tradition secret so as not to be dispossessed and stripped of all the unique claims to the status of Israel. Hos. 8.12 provides the key: the phrase 'I will write down for you the majority of my laws' implies that another part of the legal tradition has not been written down in the Tora. This external corpus signifies the Oral Tora.

The unit is linked to Gen. 18.7, ויהוה אמר המכסה אני מאברהם "The LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham [what I am about to do?]' (Gen. 18.17). The divine action not to be hidden pertains to Sodom's fate, which God did not 'seal' until He conferred with Abraham according to this midrash. But the midrash makes a subtle, yet far more important point by linking [2-5] to [1] and [6]. When God takes Abraham in his confidence, He reveals to Abraham what remains hidden to all others. The midrash links what might be hidden from Abraham to the secret, or 'mystery' (מסתורין),²⁸ of the Mishna, and thereby links the 'hidden' to the Oral Tora. That this notion of the Oral Tora as a mystery turns up in connection with Abraham is significant. At one level, the connection is based on Abraham's righteousness and the motif of the covenant in [5]. But a deeper

²⁸See J.J. Petuchowski, 'Judaism as Mystery: The Hidden Agenda?', *HUCA* 52 (1981), pp. 141-52 (145); M.N.A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990), pp. 114-23 (121-23); M. Bregman, 'Mishnah and LXX as Mystery: An Example of Jewish-Christian Polemic in the Byzantine Period', in L.I. Levine (ed.), *Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2004), pp. 333-42; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, pp. 144-46. Cf. p. 490 below.

connection may be posited to have brought about the midrashic argument, if only because the emphasis on the oral-performative translation in [2-4], rather than any other part of the Oral Tora, points to a polemic thread throughout the whole unit. The status of Abraham as the father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:5) would appear to have informed this unit. The claim of the nations to be Israel is tantamount to the claim to be Abraham's offspring—a claim Christianity made ever since the New Testament, starting with John 8:31-59. The opening and closing lemma of the unit, 'Shall I hide from Abraham', thus acquire a polemic twist: the true Abraham shared in the oral secrets of the LORD, to be kept hidden from those who claim Abrahamic origin with the Greek Tora in their hand. Only the allotment of the Oral Tora denotes the true Abraham.

The polemical nature of this passage reflects a deep desire to distinguish on the one hand between the Tora and its translations and on the other between Israel and the nations that aspire to be Israel too. The urge to avoid any impression that *targum* equated with the written Tora is not just rooted in the educational concept of the Oral Tora. And while the distinction springs from the awareness that translations tend to replace the original text, as b. Meg. 32a demonstrates,²⁹ a polemical notion boldens the distinction. According to one source, rabbis in Caesarea focused more intensely on Bible interpretation than their Babylonian colleagues as a result of the pluriform society in which Christians, Samaritans, pagans and Jews lived side by side.³⁰ Whether this source is accurate or not, careful attention to scriptural exposition and biblical wording inevitably drew attention to scriptural translations: their wording, use and status. By allocating translation to the Oral Tora, the rabbis solved many dilemmas: allowing for translation without diminishing the status of the original text, undermining gentile claims to possessing the Tora, and finally tying *targum* to rabbinic hermeneutics. What results is a bilingual text recited by two distinct voices, with the second voice repeating the first in a different language, simultaneously providing a running commentary on the first voice. So the rabbis strove to bind the *targum* to the Hebrew original in both study and performance and at the same time to maintain their distinct character as Oral and Written Tora. Both these aims, shaping the *targum* as a running commentary on the Hebrew and maintaining a difference of

²⁹ See p. 176 above.

³⁰ b. A. Zar. 4a; see Levine, *The Rabbinic Class*, p. 87; Kalmin, *The Sage*, pp. 68–74.

voice between the Hebrew and the Aramaic, effectively restrict the status of the *targum*. The *targum* functions as the communicative link between the academy and the synagogue, between the Oral and the Written Tora.

The classification of *targum* as Oral Tora employs the polemical potential of the notion that the Tora has an oral counterpart, but does not explain its importance for the third-century rabbinic circles in Palestine that coined the phrase and elaborated its notion. The insistence on the oral-performative tradition antedates the application to the *targum* as Oral Tora—in fact, the application to *targum* has every chance of being a secondary use of the concept. For the Palestinian circles and their peers the emphasis on orality had an epistemological motivation of learning through emulation of a master's life for Tora.

6.3 Traces of *targum* as Holy Writ

If the Oral Tora is all about oral tutelage and reenactment of the divine revelation, what about writing the Oral Tora? The coexistence of written and oral versions of the same repertoire may not have denied the Oral Tora its 'oral' status, for reasons outlined above. The emphasis on orality concerns the medium of learning rather than the medium of textual transmission. If so, what were the implications for its written specimens, in particular of *targum*? To answer this question, I will first dwell on rabbinic scruples with written texts of the Oral Tora, then outline the status of *targum* before its conceptualization as Oral Tora, and finally consider the implications of the evidence that *targum* once enjoyed the privilege of Holy Writ.

The rabbinic emphasis on the orality of the rabbinic teachings has often been considered a conundrum in the light of early traditions that presuppose the existence of written texts because of a presumed ban on writing the Oral Tora. Medieval commentators were as divided on the issue as modern authors are.³¹ A prohibition on writing seems to extend to *halakhot*, *targum*, prayers, and interpretations in general.³² Many of the traditions expressing this view simultaneously attest to the practice of writing prayers and *midrashim*. Both the *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli* refer

³¹H.L. Strack and G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 32.

³²See t. Shab. 13.4; t. Yad. 2.12; y. Shab. 16.1, 15c; b. Tem. 14b; b. Git. 60b.

to midrash-compilations composed in the Tannaitic period.³³ Written copies of *targum* existed too,³⁴ despite the fact that some of the sages obviously disliked any written translation.³⁵ As York has suggested, the opposition to written *targum* may have been the practical inference of their categorization as Oral Torah,³⁶ although this is not, as he asserts, to claim the same status for the *targum* as for the Hebrew text. Performing the *targum* remained optional in contrast to reciting the Hebrew original; performing the interpretation was allowed to members of the community who could not recite the Hebrew Scriptures. The *targum* is contingent on *miqra* while *miqra* stands proud. Still, its status as Oral Torah implied that a cavalier attitude to translation would be out of the question. *Targum* cannot coast.

The coexistence of oral and written versions is a given, but its implications are not. Some scholars understand the prohibition on committing halakhic and aggadic traditions to writing as a lofty ideal, others assume that the Oral Torah is called Oral to root the supplementary traditions which accompany and explain the Scriptures in the divine revelation at Mt Sinai.³⁷ Neither solution is satisfactory. Conversely, the pedagogical understanding of orality, which Fraade and Jaffee have highlighted so effectively, points to an alternative understanding which is true to both the coexistence and the notion of oral lore destined to remain oral erudition. Written compilations of *halakha* and *aggada* undeniably existed in the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods, so much is true, but the rabbinic texts nowhere suggest that the sages ever relied on a written text in their deliberations,³⁸ just as oral texts apparently took priority over written

³³R. Kalmin, 'Patterns and Developments in Rabbinic Midrash of Late Antiquity', in M. Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), pp. 285–302 (295); Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, pp. 34–37.

³⁴See m. Meg. 1.8; 2.1; m. Shab. 16.1; y. Meg. 2.1, 73a; 4.1, 74d; y. Shab. 16.1, 15b–c.

³⁵Cf. Alexander, 'Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules', p. 25; Levine, *The Aramaic Version*, pp. 14–19.

³⁶York, 'The Targum in the Synagogue', p. 80.

³⁷See, e.g., A. Goldberg, 'The Mishnah—A Study Book of Halakha', in Safrai (ed.), *The Literature of the Sages*, 1, pp. 211–62 (241–42); Schäfer, 'Das "Dogma" von der mündlichen Torah'; Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature*, pp. 117, 120.

³⁸S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), pp. 87–88; cf. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, 'Transmitting Tradition', pp. 4–13; Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Orality, Narrative, Rhetoric: New Directions in Mishnah Research', *AJS Review* 32 (2008), pp. 235–49.

copies among Geonic circles.³⁹ Written textual transmission and textual exchanges are two different things in the oral-performative setting of the rabbinic circles.

Nonetheless, to conclude that no 'ban' on writing was ever sought would be off the mark. The primary reason to oppose written versions of the Oral Tora may have concerned their use in oral settings, yet some sages drew the ultimate conclusion to take issue with writing the Oral Tora altogether. In the Tanḥuma passage quoted above (section 6.2), the covenant with Israel depends on preserving written what is written and oral what is oral so the nations of the world cannot translate the oral literature; this refers to textual transmission, not an oral-performative setting.⁴⁰ It is hard to assess the influence of this latter position in rabbinic times. These days modern scholars tend to underplay the resistance to writing, but where previous generations might exaggerate rabbinic reliance on perfect memories, explaining the resistance away today is likely to err once more, now in underestimating rabbinic qualms with written versions of the Oral Tora.

This tendency to talk down those scruples which some circles appear to have had can be ascertained from modern takes on the *textus classicus*, b. Tem. 14b. The relevant discussion of written texts follows in the wake of a discussion about drink-offerings, in the course of which R. Dimi exclaims that he would have sent a letter to Rav Yoseph with new halakhic information had he had a messenger at his disposal. The question is: had he been allowed to write that letter with a halakhic solution, thus committing to paper what is a part of the Oral Tora? Here is the discussion of that question:⁴¹

וַאִי הוּא לִיָּה מִי אִיפְשָׁר לְמַשְׁלַח וְהָא' ר' אבא בריה דר' חייא בר אבא א' ר' יוחנן
 כּוֹתְבֵי הַלְכוֹת כְּשׁוֹרְפֵי תוֹרָה וְהַלְמֵד מֵהֶן אֵין לוֹ קִיבּוּל שְׂכַר דְּדִרְשׁ ר' יְהוּדָה בַּר נַחֲמָנִי
 מִתּוֹרַגְמָנִי דְּרִישׁ לְקִישׁ כְּתוּ' אֶחָד אֵין כְּתוּב לָךְ אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֹאמַר לָךְ דְּבָרִים
 שֶׁעַל פֶּה אֵין אֶתְּהָ רִשְׁאֵי לֹאמְרָן בְּכַתֵּב וּשְׁבַכְתָּב אֵין אֶתְּהָ רִשְׁאֵי לֹאמְרָן עַל פֶּה וְתַנָּא דְּבֵי
 ר' יִשְׁמַע' כְּתוּב לָךְ אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֵלֶּה אֶתְּהָ כּוֹתֵב וַאִי אֶתְּהָ כּוֹתֵב הַלְכוֹת אִמְרֵי
 דִּילְמָ' מִילְתָּא חֲדָתִי שְׁנֵי דֵּהָא ר' יוֹחָנָן וְרִישׁ לְקִישׁ מַעֲיִינִי בְּסִיפְרָא דֶּאֱגֻדְתָּא בְּשַׁבְּתָא

³⁹Brody, *Geonim of Babylonia*, pp. 156–61.

⁴⁰See pp. 228–31 above: ואם קיימתה מה שבכתב בכתב ומה שבעל פה על פה כרתי אתך ואם שניתה מה שבעל פה בכתב ומה שבכתב בעל פה לא כרתי.

⁴¹b. Tem. 14b (par. b. Git. 60b) cited after ms Flor.

ודרשי הכי עת לעשות ליי' הפרו תורתך אמרי מוטב תיעקר אות אחת⁴² מן התורה
ואל תישתכח תורה מישר'

- [1] R. Abba b. R. Hiyya b. Abba says, R. Yoḥanan said, Those who write *halakhot* are as those who burn the Tora; and whoever learns from them receives no reward.
- [2] R. Yehuda b. Naḥmani, the spokesman of Resh Laqish, expounded, Scripture says, 'Write down these words', and Scripture says, 'according to these words' (Exod. 34.27), in order to teach you: whatever is in oral form, you may not recite from a written document; and whatever is (transmitted) in writing you may not recite orally (i.e. by heart, from memory).
- [3] A teaching from the school of R. Ishmael, 'Write these words', these you may write, but not *halakhot*.
- [4] Some say, Perhaps it is different with a new subject matter, for R. Yoḥanan and Resh Laqish used to examine the book of *aggada* on the shabbat and thus to interpret the Bible, 'It is time to act for the LORD as they have broken your law' (Ps. 119.126). They said, Better to suspend one letter in the Tora than that the Tora should be forgotten in Israel.

In his Introduction, Stemberger extracts the statement of R. Yehuda b. Naḥmani [2] from this passage.⁴³ Without the embrasure of R. Yoḥanan and R. Ishmael's school in [1] and [3], R. Yehuda's statement does not add up to a ban on writing the Oral Tora but to one on the use of any written *targum* in the synagogue;⁴⁴ R. Yehuda b. Naḥmani 'was after all a *meturgeman*!' He also maintains that R. Yoḥanan in [1] only took aim at learning from written *halakhot*, but not their writing *per se*; even so his position was not universally accepted [3-4]. The same lack of universal acceptance applies to objections to written *aggada*, which some rabbis actually rated highly [4]. The tone has been set: there was no unanimous rabbinic ban on writing the Oral Tora and the ban merely applied to rabbinic instruction and knowledge acquisition from written sources.

⁴² Flor and Mung⁹⁵ support אות אחת מן התורה, Vati19 אות אחת שבתורה, Vati20 אות אחת, but Vilna and Son only read תורה. Although Vilna and Son may suffer from haplography, a case can be made that their version contrasts the value of the Oral Tora with the Written Tora. AIU147 has a large minus at this point.

⁴³ Strack and Stemberger, Introduction, pp. 32–33.

⁴⁴ The English translation of the original German edition of Strack and Stemberger's Introduction, p. 33 is erroneous at this point ('it condemns the use of oral Targums in the synagogal reading'); 'oral' should be 'written'.

This analysis of this passage is problematic on several counts. It is correct that R. Yehuda b. Nahmani's view on its own may not amount to a ban on writing but (more precisely) to a ban on learning Oral Tora from written texts and Written Tora from memory. But dislodging the view of R. Yehuda b. Nahmani from its current co-text deprives the statement of any context and denies its present co-text. Moreover, his statement hardly applied to *targum*, because R. Yehuda b. Nahmani was the private *meturgeman* of Resh Laqish and a *darshan*, so his role as interpreter refers to his performance as a leading rabbi's mouthpiece. The preceding reference to writing down *halakhot* in [1] supports this view. But even if we assume for the sake of argument that he was the interpreter of Scripture in the synagogue, we cannot simply ignore the context in which his saying is presently embedded. That two stern statements against writing down *halakhot* brace R. Yehuda b. Nahmani's view is editorially more relevant than Stemberger allows for. Whatever Yehuda's elusive original intent, the present text refers to the oral transmission of *halakhot* and never even mentions scriptural translation. The *halakhot* are the peg on which Yehuda's saying hangs, reinforced by the following teaching of R. Ishmael's school which, by way of *inclusio*, once more refers to *halakhot*. Whether or not R. Ishmael's school actually ventured the opinion in [3],⁴⁵ the present sequence raises the bar by citing a *baraita*. The sequence in [1-3] leaves precious little room for written copies.

The final discussion in [4] ostensibly focuses on *aggada* rather than *halakhot*, but in its present position it adds a twist in which *aggada* is taken as *pars pro toto* for the Oral Tora. It begins with the statement that a new subject matter may justify writing the Oral Tora. This 'new subject matter' harks back to the halakhic information R. Dimi wanted to send to Babylonia, the novelty of which justified his putting pen to paper (had he had the chance). To preserve Oral Tora, R. Yoḥanan and Resh Laqish say, rabbis are allowed to violate God's Written Tora. They read Ps. 119.126 as if it says, 'in times when it is necessary to act on behalf of God, breach your Tora'. This interpretation, by showing the exception, confirms the rule that Oral Tora should not be put down. It is difficult to say how much weight the resolution carries. Its introduction with *אמרי*, 'some say' and *דילמ* 'perhaps' suggests a mild refutation of the dilemma, here the

⁴⁵Doubted by Schäfer, 'Das "Dogma"', pp. 174-75.

problem whether R. Dimi's letter would have been legitimate.⁴⁶ Often such refutations are rejected, but not here, leaving the issue open-ended. This ending may be deliberate, for there is an unmistakable irony in [4]. First, because the existence of Oral Torah in written form is acknowledged as a breach of God's law via a metaphor of the Written Torah ('better to suspend one letter...'). Second, the eradication of one letter, or even the entire Torah according to the editions, inversely matches the initial warning in [1] that writing the Oral Torah is like burning Torah (because the Oral Torah may not be saved from a fire on a shabbat). But above all, R. Yoḥanan's insistence that *halakhot* may not be recorded in [1] is refuted in [4] with his own interpretation of Ps. 119. He defeated himself.

Granted, R. Yoḥanan's argument applied to *aggada* and not to *halakhot* and he did not himself raise his perusal of a written copy as an objection against his own view. One could argue that [1-3] are a self-sustained unit, to which [4] represents a later correction. Virtually the same unit [4] occurs elsewhere in the Bavli but significantly without the suggestion that R. Yoḥanan applied Ps. 119.126 against his own position.⁴⁷ Still, even though [4] is a strand added to the self-contained unit of [1-3] which itself is a digression, or afterthought, within the Talmudic discourse, there can still be little doubt about its editorial impact as a playful mitigation of the misgivings R. Yoḥanan had about written texts of the Oral Torah. R. Yoḥanan's rejection of writing the Oral Torah, reinforced by R. Yehuda b. Naḥmani and the school of R. Ishmael, now hangs in the balance. The conclusion to infer from these observations is neither a universal ban on writing nor a universal acceptance of written texts of the Oral Torah outside the oral-performative settings of academy and liturgy. That the latter position ultimately won the day should not close our eyes for dissent among leading Amoraim.

The nuance that different standpoints existed is relevant for the rabbinic perception of written translations. That such translations existed is amply evidenced and has long been accepted. Indirect support for the assumption that scriptural translations were usually committed to writing

⁴⁶Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, p. 260. The (late) emendation in *מקובצת* שיטה, namely *אמרי רבנן* 'our rabbis say', adds more weight to the objection, but thereby confirms the point that the current phrasing lacks a punch.

⁴⁷See b. Git. 60a, where Ps. 119.126 justifies another breach of traditional law. See further b. Yom. 69a; b. Ber. 63a.

may be found in the combination of functions which the school teacher fulfilled: writing, teaching and translating.⁴⁸ Direct support can be found in a number of texts which refer to written versions. As observed above, the reception of the *mishna* in *m. Meg.* 2.1 and parallels (about reading Esther in translation) demonstrates the existence of written translations, which some even considered to have been written ‘in accord with the *halakha*’, with which other or later generations of rabbis wrestled for its halakhic justification.⁴⁹ The actual *mishna* which excludes translations from the Holy Writ—because Holy Writ must be written in Ashurit, with ink on leather—also implies that they are written (*m. Yad.* 4.5). The *mishna* which relates written translations to the necessity of saving Holy Writ from a fire on a shabbat likewise provides firm evidence for the reality of written translations (*m. Shab.* 16.1). Whilst reluctant to admit the role of translations, the halakhic discussions simultaneously indicate that translations were written in many languages. But what status did these written translations enjoy? Apart from interpreting in the synagogue, the status of *targum* has been most acutely treated in connection with two questions: may scriptural translations be written and are translations to be saved from a fire on a shabbat?

A signpost of the high esteem accorded to written translations is *m. Meg.* 1.8. I will dwell on this *mishna*’s reception in the next chapter, here I am interested in the basic parameters this text conveys. The anonymous voice in this *mishna* states that scrolls of Scripture may be written in any language but *tefillin* and *mezuzot* may only be written in Ashurit.⁵⁰ It is one contrasting pair among many in this chapter. By claiming that there is no difference between them apart from the language they are written in, the text implies that both are ritually valid. The Bavli understands the *mishna* to imply the kosher production of scriptural texts, as it pointedly adds that such translations, once sown with tendons, render the hands unclean (*b. Meg.* 8b). To render the hands unclean is rabbinic terminology for Holy Writ.

The same *mishna* follows the leniency of the anonymous voice with the more restricted view of Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel, who claims that scriptural scrolls were not allowed to be written in any language other than

⁴⁸ York, ‘The Targum in the Synagogue’.

⁴⁹ See above, pp. 190–201.

⁵⁰ For the question whether this *mishna* speaks of languages or scripts, see section 7.3.

Greek. Which of the two views the Mishna prefers cannot be established. Traditionally, a named rabbi's statement would have been considered the minority view, while the anonymous statement would have represented the majority view, but this approach may be misleading.⁵¹ In any case the restrictive 'minority' view would prove decisive for the rabbinic reception of this mishna in the Talmudim,⁵² in which written Greek translations are considered fit for liturgical use, hence as Holy Writ.

It is easy to overlook the implications of this mishna. Scholars argued that the existence of written specimens of *targum* did not deny *targum* the status of Oral Torah since the objection concerns the use of written texts in oral-performative settings; otherwise their existence was entirely unproblematic. It is indeed true that rabbinic objections mostly focus on the liturgical use of written translations. Even so, m. Meg. 1.8 evinces that written translations posed problems beyond their use outside the synagogue and the academy; for translations which render the hands unclean blur the distinction between *targum* as Oral Torah and *miqra* as Written Torah.

Typically, the mishna betrays no interest in the way the anonymous and named views relate to each other. One might be a response to the other during a debate, or both might be simultaneous responses to issues that emerged at a local level, or even responses delivered on different occasions long before the editor of the Mishna juxtaposed them. Nor does the language allow any firm conclusions: that Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel cites a tradition that permits (התיר) Greek does not intimate a novel leniency where a strict prohibition used to prevail.⁵³ His may be a *de jure* decision amidst a lack of halakhic clarity, against the backdrop of actual practice. For all we know, there is no explicit ruling on the uses of languages by previous generations. Historically, it is likely that the last view reflects the status Greek translations had long enjoyed rather than a novelty introduced by recent generations. Any specific objections against translations other than Greek are not expressed, but they may once more follow from the extraordinary status of the Greek translations and the Greek language, which was the only one, Palestinian Amoraim observed, which could do justice to the Torah (y. Meg. 1.11[8], 71c). The legends

⁵¹ See Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature*, p. 104.

⁵² See y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c, discussed below, p. 294, and sections 7.3–7.4 in general.

⁵³ For forbidding and permitting, see b. Beṣ. 16b.

of the LXX were well known among the rabbis.⁵⁴ Conversely, Aramaic translations, while they may have been practised and composed for some centuries, had only been established as a regular part of the synagogue service during his lifetime. In the opinion of 'our rabbis', such written non-Greek translations ranked as Holy Writ, but Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel would not condone them, citing permission for Greek alone.

It follows from m. Meg. 1.8 that the rejection of non-Greek translations does not just apply to their liturgical use but also to their written existence by itself. This point can be illustrated from the famously difficult m. Shab. 16.1 and its parallels in the Tosefta, Yerushalmi and Bavli.⁵⁵ I will discuss each of these texts in their own right, but also relate them to one another. When m. Shab. 16.1 relates that Holy Writings should be saved from a fire, irrespective of the shabbat, and that translations require withdrawal (*geniza*), this stipulation is ambivalent: does it imply that these translations are holy and should also be saved, or not? The Tosefta takes the former view, and categorizes translations together with Holy Writings, as does the Yerushalmi. The Bavli contrasts the two different answers. As it happens, this mishna's presumed difficulty evaporates when it is seen to focus on the borderline position of *targum* as Holy Writ. The Mishna, in its typically terse way of wording, reads as follows (cited after TS E. l. 43):⁵⁶

כל כתבי הקודש מצילים אותם מפני הדליקה
בין שקורים בהם ובין שאינן⁵⁷ קורים בהם
אף⁵⁸ על פי כתובים⁵⁹ בכל לשון וטעונים⁶⁰ גניזה
מפני⁶¹ מה אין קורים בהם מפני ביטול בית המדרש

⁵⁴A. Wasserstein and D.J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵⁵S. Friedman, תוספתא עתיקתא: ליחס מקבילות המשנה והתוספתא [א]—כל כתבי הקדש, *Tarbiz* 62 (1992/1993), pp. 313–38.

⁵⁶For a description and collation, see A. Goldberg, פירוש למשנה מסכת שבת (Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1976), pp. 53 (no. 70), 284.

⁵⁷TS E1.43, KaufA50, TS E2.38, TS E2.39, TS E2.40, TS E2.41–42, Parm3173, Mun95 read בין; Vati08 and Vat487 read אין.

⁵⁸TS E2.40, Parm3173, Vati08, Vat487, Mun95 and Son1489 read אין.

⁵⁹TS E1.43, KaufA50, TS E2.40, TS E2.41–42, Parm3173, Vati08, Vat487, Vilna support אין ואע"פ; Ox23, Mun95, Ven and Son1489 support אין.

⁶⁰Vati08, Vat487, Mun95, Son1489 read שכתובין; TS E2.40 read כתובין; TS E1.43, KaufA50, TS E2.41–42, and Parm3173 support כתובין. Before a participle, the relative pronoun may be dropped; see Pérez Fernández, *Rabbinic Hebrew*, p. 242.

- [1] All Holy Writings—they [must] save them from the fire,
- [2] whether they recite them or not,
- [3] even if written in any language, *although* they require withdrawal.
- [4] Why do they not recite them? Because of the neglect of the study house.

This mishna raises more questions than it answers. Above all, it does not make plain how the four units—which correspond to sentence divisions in the fragment quoted—join up. Crucial in this sequence is the third sentence. Its interpretation is compounded by variant readings for the conjunctions of its two clauses, which I have italicized in my translation above. Then there are equivocal terms. Which is the Holy Writ that is not recited on a shabbat in [2]? Ambivalence also surrounds the word גנייה ‘withdrawal’, which may be a matter of protection or censorship.

All the confusion follows from two closely related questions: does Scripture ‘written in any language’ qualify as Holy Writ and is ‘withdrawal’ the flip side of saving, because Holy Writ requires withdrawal when the scrolls become unfit for use? Or are the demands of saving and withdrawal not evenly matched? Some commentaries maintain that targum does not rank among the Scriptures to be saved but still require withdrawal, others that they should be saved and withdrawn. Among the latter, Rashi, for example, does not impute a valid status to written translations in spite of his insistence on their saving. Apparently, he assumes that these written translations still possess a modicum of holiness, deemed (slightly?) less than that of the Hebrew Scriptures, hence they require saving and safekeeping. There is of course a palpable tension here. Why is targum brought up here, and why does the mishna lay down the rule of withdrawal if targum is not holy? If any doubt existed about the conjoined status of Holy Writ and written targum it makes no sense whatsoever to join these laws at the hip at the cost of insoluble difficulties. Grammatically, the clause ‘even if they are written in any language’ depends on כל כתבי הקודש as the antecedent for the predicate כתובים, whether or not the sentence

⁶¹TS E1.43, TS F 2(1)167 and Vatro8 support וטעונוים; KaufA50, TS E2.40 (with error of ע for ו in טעעין), TS E2.41-42, Parm3173, Vat487, Mun95 support טעונוים.

⁶²TS E1.43, KaufA50, TS E2.41-42, Parm3173 read מפני; TS E2.40, Mun95, Vatro8 and Son1489 read ומפני. Vat487 initially omitted this word, the interlinear correction is illegible to me.

starts with a disjunctive *waw*.⁶³ However we view this *mishna*, translations are indubitably treated as Holy Writ; there are no two ways about it.

The key to solving the enigma is to read *m. Shab. 16.1* in the light of the anonymous voice of *m. Meg. 1.8*. In both texts this voice acknowledges the practice that written translations were considered Holy Writ, and even that they were used for recitation. In both texts resistance is tangible. By the time this *mishna* (*m. Shab. 16.1*) was composed, *targum* as Holy Writ had become inadmissible for the oral-performative translation in rabbinic eyes, yet the tradition still referred to *targum* in terms of the Holy Writ, and the written translations that existed could not be downgraded to profane books.⁶⁴ On this view, the ambivalences and frictions disappear as well. Which is the Holy Writ not recited on a *shabbat*? The openness is almost a gap-exercise: those portions not used as lections in the synagogue, such as most of the Prophets and Writings; manuscripts in such a poor physical or textual shape that they were deemed unfit for use; and finally, written translations which the *turgeman* could not recite since translation should be performed by heart—provided that this *mishna* shares the view of *m. Meg. 1.8* that they are ritually valid, but also shares the view that they may not be used to perform the translation.

The equivocal meaning of 'withdrawal' also falls into place. *גנייה* is the technical term for safekeeping documents containing the name of God after they fall into disuse—to protect the Holy Writ in keeping with the general topic of our *mishna*. In the parallels of the *Tosefta* and *Bavli*, however, the same term refers to taking documents out of public circulation because of their unacceptable contents.⁶⁵ That is exactly what this *mishna* conveys in its explicit contrast, because it emphasizes the surprise that even *targum* should be saved: *אף על פי* 'even if, although'. For this reason the disjunctive *waw* before *טעונים* seems natural to me, although not necessary: an alternative to my translation would be to drop 'although'.

⁶³Regardless of the variant readings at this point, see n. 59 above; contrast Goldberg, *פירוש למשנה מסכת שבת*, p. 285. A similar variant reading is *טעונים גנייה* for *טעונים גנייה*; here the requirement of *geniza* could be construed as an additional stipulation to all foregoing writings, thus categorizing the translations together with the 'Holy Writings'. See also Friedman, *כל כתבי הקדש*, p. 323, who disagrees with Goldberg's preferences.

⁶⁴They may have contained the Tetragrammaton; see Ch. Seven.

⁶⁵Cf. Epstein, *מבוא לנוסח המשנה*, I, p. 649; Friedman, *כל כתבי הקדש*, pp. 323–24.

Finally, the ‘interruption’ or ‘neglect’ of the study house also assumes greater precision. This reference is a stockphrase in the Mishna, used very generally to promote the study of the Oral Torah. At face value, its meaning is opaque: why would reciting the Holy Writ lead to such neglect? The ellipsis in the text is real, and its function may be to invite further consideration on the importance of the Oral Torah. But here too, the awkward reality that at one stage written *targum* was used for recitation illuminates the use of the stockphrase. It is not just that translations cannot substitute for the real thing in rabbinic discourse, but also that their medium is inverted: reciting from a written text what should have been oral negates the Oral Torah. While the ellipsis may be explained as the inadvertent result of a clumsy editorial reduction, its current meaning appears to hint at the re-enactment of the Oral Torah which precludes the use of written texts.

The Mishna almost invites suggestions of shifting positions in its ambivalence about the status of *targum* as Holy Writ—a status at odds with the preferred rabbinic view of *targum* as Oral Torah. The most satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon is that the standing of translations as Holy Writ is historical, one inherited from the past, which the reference to withdrawal challenges. *Targum* is Holy Writ but requires to be taken out of circulation. The concept of *targum* as Oral Torah is the determinative factor here for the antagonism to written *targum* against the background of their traditional, soon to be superseded status. It comes as no surprise that later commentators concluded that translations should not be saved from a fire. This latter position reveals a shift in understanding, in which the old and the new status of *targum* create an awkward discordance.

This shifting position of *targum* has not been given due credit in modern scholarship. In the reception history of this mishna, the rabbinic distinction between translations and the Hebrew Scriptures has always been taken for granted to the extent that the conflict between the notions of *targum* as Holy Writ and *targum* as Oral Torah becomes unbearable and prompts scholars towards the assumption that translation either is no Holy Writ, or not quite as holy as Holy Writ. Such a reading flies in the face of this mishna’s grammar, and indeed the text requires either supplementation or dissection.⁶⁶ In this sense, the mishna’s interpretation is emblematic

⁶⁶ As the positions of Rav Huna and Rav Hisda in b. Shab. 115a require in their own ways; see D. Weiss Halivni, *מסכת שבת, ביאורים בתלמוד, מקורות ומסורות* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1982), pp. 413–16 (114).

for the modern perception of how the Mishna relates to its parallels in the Tosefta and the Talmudim, and for the difficulty to accommodate two notions of translation that do not sit easily with one another. Sometimes textual cruces may have to be explained as difficulties that emerged from a flawed textual transmission or the uncanny consequences of somewhat too drastic editorial activity. At other times certain notions and dogmas may be unstable and wavering because of historical wrangles and a development of thought which left their imprint on both the reception and the wording of the *halakha*.

In recent years the relationship between the Mishna and the Tosefta resurfaced when scholars, notably Friedman and Hauptman, challenged the traditional wisdom that the Mishna precedes the Tosefta.⁶⁷ Since the Mishna is a polished, stylized text, which represents a thoroughly edited version of the *halakhot* it contains, while the Tosefta offers, at least in some cases, a window on an earlier stage of the halakhic development and textual arrangement of parallel materials, interpreters of the Mishna should not assume that the Tosefta is a later parallel. In fact, the Tosefta may shed light on an earlier version of the Mishna as both works apparently draw on an earlier source. The complicated nature of the relationship has already been pointed out in connection with the notion of the holy tongue above. Although often a response to a proto-Mishna, the Tosefta is not by definition the more authentic or older version. As a response, it has its own modicum of rearrangement and reinterpretation of the *halakhot* it transmits, just like the Mishna. As has been argued by Alexander, we should not necessarily view the composition of Mishna and Tosefta from strictly written perspectives.⁶⁸ But the exact value to be placed on the Tosefta's evidence can be difficult to determine wherever its text is not self-contained. This combined difficulty influences the impact of the Tosefta on the interpretation of *m. Shab. 16.1*.

⁶⁷See, e.g., Friedman, כל כתבי הקדש; S. Friedman, 'The Primacy of Tosefta to Mishna in Synoptic Parallels', in H. Fox and T. Meacham (eds.), *Introducing Tosefta: Textual, Intratextual, and Intertextual Studies* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1999), pp. 99–121; S. Friedman, תוספתא עתיקתא: מסכת פסח ראשון (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002); Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*. See also Houtman, *Mishnah and Tosefta*; R. Zeidman, 'An Introduction to the Genesis and Nature of Tosefta, the Chameleon of Rabbinic Literature', in Fox and Meacham (eds.), *Introducing Tosefta*, pp. 73–97.

⁶⁸Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah*.

The editor of the *mishna*, as Friedman argued, probably condensed previous formulations of *halakhot* concerning the Holy Writ into a single, taut and highly equivocal unit.⁶⁹ Reversing the tendencies of scholarship up to that point, Friedman goes on to explain the ambivalences of the *mishna* in the light of the *Tosefta*—and continues to examine how later recipients, as evidenced in the *Talmudim*, wrestled with the interpretative problems that arose from the *Mishna*'s compact formulation of the laws. He observes that the *Mishna*'s order of issues is peculiar, as it starts with the subject of saving, continues with that of reciting, returns to saving (as withdrawal) and then returns to reciting again. Conversely, in the *Tosefta* these subjects stand on their own, as *t. Shab. 13.1* speaks of reciting and does not return to this issue again; from *13.2* onwards the *Tosefta* deals with saving, and the issue of withdrawal only enters the discussion by way of association. Accordingly, Friedman claims, the editor of the *Mishna* combined once distinct issues into one: reciting the Holy Writ on a shabbat; saving Holy Writ on a shabbat; and the withdrawal of written texts. The association of all these once independent *halakhot* was made possible by the shared key term 'Holy Writ'. However, *כל כתבי הקדש* has two different meanings in this *mishna*, namely Tanakh and Writings: all of Tanakh needs to be saved from a fire on a shabbat, but only the Writings are not to be recited on a shabbat.⁷⁰ Yet this traditional distinction, which Friedman accepts, evaporates if we accept that all of the Tanakh would be ruled out for reciting whenever written in any language other than Hebrew. The *mishna* specifies that even those portions of the Holy Writ which are not recited but are in Hebrew, or would have been recited had they not been written in another language, are to be saved. It may well have been inspired by the *Tosefta*'s viewpoint, but it makes sense in its own right.

The subtlety of the position of *targum* in the *Mishna* is considerable. The *Mishna* admits between its teeth that translations share the status of Holy Writ but follows this up with the stipulation that they should be withdrawn from circulation. The most satisfactory solution for this conundrum is that translations ought not to have been considered Holy Writ, as *m. Yad. 4.5* implies. The last statement there is (almost) incontrovertible:

⁶⁹Friedman, *כל כתבי הקדש*.

⁷⁰Friedman, *כל כתבי הקדש*, pp. 318, 335.

לעולם אינו מטמא עד שיכתבינו אשורית על העור בדיו

In fact, [scriptural texts] only defile the hands if they are written in Ashurit [= Hebrew in Jewish square script], on leather, and with ink.⁷¹

On this understanding, translations may historically belong to the category of Holy Writ, hence should be saved even though one may not recite from them, but the problem should not have existed in the first place. Any Scriptures not written in Ashurit do not defile the hands, which rules out even those Greek Scriptures which Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel permitted. Consequently, this position in *m. Shab. 16.1*, where translations are discussed as Holy Writ but marked for withdrawal, should not be considered stable—as is reflected in the hardly concealed Tannaitic dispute about the requirement to save translations.⁷² Instead, it is an improvised assessment of their status soon to be superseded by the new rabbinic reality (at least in letter and thought).

It is significant that both the *Tosefta* and *Yerushalmi* set down the rule that translations should be saved and stored away. The *Bavli* shares that position but adds further distinctions, turns the ambivalence of the *mishna* into a major stand-off between two Amoraim, and eventually leaves the problem of conflicting interpretations unresolved. The *Tosefta* leaves no doubt about both the necessity of saving *targum* or the view that written *targum* must not remain afloat. The *Tosefta* reads as follows (edn Lieberman, 13.1-3):

אע"פ שאמרו אין קורין בכתבי הקדש אבל שונים בהן ודורשין בהן ואם צריך לו דבר לבדוק נוטל ובודק אמ' ר' נחמיה מפני מה אמרו אין קורין בכתבי הקדש מפני שטרי הדיוטות שיאמרו בכתבי הקדש אין קורין קול וחומר בשטרי הדיוטות היו כתובין תרגום ובכל⁷³ לשון מצילין אותן וגונזין אותן אמ' ר' יוסה מעשה שהלך ר' חלפתא אצל רבן גמליאל לטבריא ומצאו שהיה יושב על שולחנו של יוחנן בן נזיף ובידו ספר איוב תרגום והיה קורא בו אמ' לו ר' חלפתא זכור הייתי ברבן גמליאל הזקן אבי אביך שהיה יושב על גב מעלה בהר הבית והביאו לפניו⁷⁴ ספר איוב תרגום ואמ' לבניו וגנוזו תחת הנדבך באותה שעה שלח רבן גמליאל וגנוזו ר' יוסה בי ר' יהודה או' עריבה של טיט כפה עליו ר' אומ' שתי תשובות בדבר טיט לא היה בהר הבית דבר אחר וכי מאבדין אותן ביד אלא מניחין אותן במקום התורפה והן נרקבין מאיליהן

⁷¹For a discussion of this passage, see pp. 288–90 below.

⁷²See also Halivni, שבת, pp. 413–16.

⁷³The *editio princeps* reads בכל בכל. For the meaning and variant readings of תרגום, see pp. 288–89 below.

⁷⁴The *mss* Erfurt, Lon445 and the *editio princeps* read לבניו for לבניו.

- [1] Even though they have said, They do not read in the Holy Scriptures, they do review in them and expound them. And if someone needs to check something, he takes [them] and checks.
- [2] Said R. Neḥemya, Why did they say "They do not read in the Holy Scriptures"? Because of ordinary documents, so that one would reason, They do not read in Holy Scriptures, so much more in ordinary documents!
- [3] [if] they are written in *targum* [=Aramaic] or in whatever language, they must be saved and stored away.
- [4] Said R. Yose, The precedent is when R. Ḥalafta went to Rabban Gamaliel in Tiberias and found him sitting at the table of Yoḥanan b. Neẓif. And in his hand was a scroll of Job in translation, which he was reading. R. Ḥalafta said to him, I used to recall of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, your grandfather, that he was sitting on a staircase of the Temple Mount when they brought to him a scroll of Job in translation. He instructed his children and they hid it under a layer of stones.
- [5] At that moment Rabban Gamaliel sent and hid it.
- [6] R. Yose b. R. Yehuda used to say, He inverted a tub of mortar on it.
- [7] Rabbi says, Two refutations on this matter, there was no mortar at the Temple Mount. A different issue is, do they destroy them on purpose? Instead, they dispose of it in a place of decomposition and they perish on their own.

The Tosefta has a different structure and focus than the Mishna. First, it quotes an anonymous voice, which states that the Holy Writ is not recited, then qualifies this statement to allow their use for private study purposes. It goes on to provide an explanation of the reason why they did not read in the Scriptures in [2], and why *targum* has to be withdrawn from circulation [3-7]. The Tosefta's legal precedent is absent from the Mishna. Above all, however, the Tosefta summarily refers to saving and storing without any reference to the context of a fire on a shabbat or the fact that the Holy Writ has to be saved. The text focuses on saving and withdrawing *targum* in an apparent addendum to a *halakha* which has not been stated explicitly. The Tosefta sometimes leaves the impression that it comments on or responds to an earlier text, whether oral or written, which it does not quote. This makes its focus all the more interesting, since [3-7] effectively deal with *targum*.

The ruling that *targum* must be withdrawn [3] is followed by a legal precedent, narrated by R. Yose, that appears to shed light on the status of *targum* as Holy Writ. His quotation refers to a precedent within a prece-

dent, that also features in the discussion of the Bavli. Rabban Gamaliel is found reading a Targum of Job. As soon as he is told that his grandfather, Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, had a Targum of Job walled in after it had been presented to him, he too gives orders to store his Targum away. Which translations are brought to grandfather and grandson, or why, receives no mention. The similarity of these two cases depends on the object, a *targum* of Job. No mention is made of the physical state of the translation rendering the scroll unfit for use either by deterioration or by the number of mistakes contained in it.⁷⁵ To argue that the translation was not approved because of either the provenance or the contents of this Targum ('because the date of the Messiah is in it') would be pure speculation;⁷⁶ in point of fact, the grandchild has at first no objection to reading it. In the present text, no such speculation appears warranted. All we can infer from the context at the redactional level is that withdrawing this *targum* from circulation has to do with its being a translation *as such*,⁷⁷ which, still at the editorial level, was probably written in Aramaic following [3]. The Tosefta is the first unambivalent witness to וָאֵל meaning something else than mere withdrawal out of protection for the Holy Writ; hiding a scroll which is, for all we know, physically fit for purpose under a layer of stones amounts to suppression.

So far so good. The story about Rabban Gamaliel and his grandfather does not illustrate the sanctity of the translation, so that it requires *geniza*, but rather its rejection and its withdrawal from circulation. But the Tosefta continues with two statements in [6-7] that go further. What is the function of this additional material? Undoubtedly, it illustrates the obligation to store a translation already expressed in [4-5], but that is not all. R. Yose indicates that translations may actively be destroyed. This conclusion could not stand in any starker contrast to the condition of saving any scriptural translation on a shabbat, with which the Tosefta opened. Rabbi does not object to R. Yose that translations may not be destroyed by mortar; rather, he says, there was no mortar at the time of Rabban Gamaliel, and only then he grants that translations should perish on their own. There is no

⁷⁵ See y. Shab. 16.1, 15b-c.

⁷⁶ The date of the messiah has often been postulated on the basis of b. Meg. 3a (which does not specifically refer to a *targum* of Job). As for the provenance, see R. le Déaut, *Introduction à la littérature targumique* (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1966), pp. 68-70.

⁷⁷ So also E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 410.

word on the obligation to save them, a noteworthy silence which is hardly accidental. All the same, Rabbi imputes these scrolls with at least a degree of holiness sufficient to warrant their protection. Once more, their status does not appear to be stable: they are sacred but not so sacred as to avoid withdrawal from public circulation. The term 'withdrawal' here has the two connotations of sacred text which require protection in disuse and suppressed text that is to be left out of any public discourse. This double entendre reflects an improvization of norms in a field where the wind is blowing in a new direction.

In the Yerushalmi we find a further discussion of this issue (y. Shab. 16.1, 15b-c), which focuses more explicitly on the holiness of translations. Since there is a textual crux in the first part, in [3-4], which sets up the latter part of the discussion, it is vital to consider the passage as a whole:

כל כתבי הקודש כול' מהו בין שקורין בהן בין שאין קורין בהן בין שיש בהן טעויות
בין שאין בהן טעויות והא תני ספר שיש בו שתים שלש טעויות בכל דף ודף מתקנו
וקורא בו ארבע אינו קורא בו מן מה דתנינן מפני מה אין קורין בהן מפני ביטול בית
המדרש הדא אמרה בין תורה לנביאים לכתבי הקודש אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה
מאן דאמ' מטמאין את הידים מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה ומאן דאמ' אין מטמאין את
הידיים אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה התיבון הרי עברי שכתבו תרגום הרי אינו מטמא
את הידיים ומצילין אותו מפני הדליקה מן מה דתנינן אע"פ (ש) [ש] כתובין⁷⁸ בכל לשון
טעונין גניזה הדא אמרה שמצילין אותן מפני הדליקה מתנית' דר' שמעון דר' שמעון
אמר' אין דבר משום שבות שעומד בפני כתבי הקודש מה פליגין תמן מפני בזיון ברם
הכא כל עמא מודיי שמצילין אותן מפני הדליקה למי נצרכה לרבן שמעון בן גמליאל
אע"ג דרבן שמעון בן גמליאל אמ' אף בספרים לא התירו שיכתבו אלא ייונית מודי הוא
הכא שמצילין אותן מפני הדליקה מעשה ברבן גמליאל שהיה עומד על הב(י)נין(ם) [1]
בהר"הבית והביאו לו ספר איוב כתוב תרגום ואמר לבנאי וגנוו תחת הנדבך

[1] 'All Holy Writings' (m. Shab. 16.1) and so on.

[2] What is the meaning of 'whether they recite them or not'? Whether they contain errors or not, for it has been taught, A scroll which has two to three errors per column, one corrects it and recites it. [If it has] four [errors], one does not recite it.

[3] From what we have learned, 'And why do they not recite them? Because of the neglect of the study house' (m. Shab. 16.1), it follows [that the *halakha* applies] to the Tora and the Prophets.

[4] 'As for the Holy Writings, they do not save them from a fire'.

⁷⁸The scribe ended the line with ש as a graphic filler, but subsequently forgot to write the letter as part of the word on the new line; the error was corrected by a later hand.

- [5] Who says that they defile the hands [also holds that] they may save them from a fire, and who says that they do not defile the hands [holds the view that] they may not save them from a fire.
- [6] They objected, Yet 'Hebrew which is written in targum [...]'⁷⁹ does not defile the hands' (m. Yad. 4.5), yet it is saved from a fire.
- [7] From what we have learned, 'Even though they are written in any language, they require storage', it follows that they must be saved from a fire.
- [8] The mishna is [according to] R. Shimon, for R. Shimon said, 'No matter on account of the Shabbat stands against the Holy Writ' (m. Eruv. 10.3).
- [9] What do they disagree about? There [they must be saved] to avert disgrace, but here everyone teaches that they must be saved from a fire. For whom is it [then] necessary [to point this out]? For Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel. Even though Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel said: 'Even scrolls they did not allow to be written except in Greek' (m. Meg. 1.8), here he admits that they must be saved from a fire.
- [10] The case of Rabban Gamaliel who was standing over the builders on the Temple Mount. They brought him a scroll of Job written in targum. He told the builders that they should store it away under a layer of bricks.

At first the Yerushalmi clarifies that certain scrolls are not used for recitation because of the number of scribal errors in a scroll [2]. Then it asks to which documents the mishnaic line of reasoning applies [3]—that reading these scrolls may distract from the study in the academy—as the mishna says why but not to which scrolls this constraint applies. The answer is curt, curious and notoriously difficult to interpret. Two problems persistently elude interpreters: where to put a full stop in the sequence: *הדא אמרה* *בין תורה לנביאים לכתבי הקודש אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה* The Leiden manuscript (Scal3, f. 187^v) does not have any division here and apparently marks [3-4] as a single unit. The question of demarcation is inextricably linked to another: what to make of *כתבי הקודש* in this connection?

I do not believe that 'Holy Writings' goes with the Tora and Prophets of [3] and denotes the third part of the canon, the Writings: 'to the Tora, the Prophets and the Sacred Writings';⁸⁰ if so, the precise word *כתובים* is to be expected. The construction *בין ... ל...* is also common with two rather than three components. The phrase *לכתבי הקודש* is more likely to

⁷⁹Only the relevant part of the Mishna is cited, omitting a clause in between.

⁸⁰So S. Lieberman, *הירושלמי כפשוטו*, I, I, פסחים, שבת, עירובין, פסחים (Jerusalem: Darom, 1934), p. 192; Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, III, p. 202; Goldberg, *מסכת שבת*, p. 285. See also Y.N. Epstein, *לגרידי הירושלמי*, Tarbiz 3 (1932), pp. 237-48 (242).

belong to what follows, as Sussman and Friedman assume, although they argue that some text has gone missing in the text after this very phrase. The supposedly missing text is indicated in the recent diplomatic edition of the Leiden MS by the omission markers « », which are an emendation on the part of the editor rather than a reflection of the manuscript (the interpunction in this edition is not original either).⁸¹

The answer *בין תורה לנביאים* 'from the Tora to the Prophets' may appear counter-intuitive, because these scrolls are to be recited on a shabbat, but makes sense along the lines of the Tosefta: the context is study, which points to private or non-liturgical reading which is forbidden to ensure that non-scriptural texts would certainly be checked. The traditional distinction between the first two and third parts of the canon, to the effect that the Writings were off limits for the shabbat, whereas the Tora and *haftarot* were not (so *פני משה* ad loc.), are little more than an attempt to make sense of the text, partly informed by the Bavli (b. Shab. 115a). We do not need to read the *כתובים* 'Writings' into this mix and harmonize all that is said about our topic in disparate sources.

My translation of [4] adopts Epstein's and Lieberman's suggestion that we have a *baraita* here brought up to contrast with the *mishna*.⁸² Where the *mishna* calls for saving Holy Writ, the *baraita* counters that scrolls ought not to be saved from a fire on a shabbat. That the *baraita* has not been introduced by *תני* is not uncommon. To read *לכתבי הקודש* with [4] and assuming [4] is a *baraita* that contradicts the *mishna* makes particularly good sense if we reckon with a historically more flexible definition of what constitutes Holy Writ. The term *לכתבי הקודש* cannot solely apply to Tora and Prophets in view of what follows (with a reference to Job), nor can it reasonably refer to the Writings with a term that applies to Tora as well. Hence the expression as a whole must include something wider, which is all the more likely for the following discussion which focuses on *targum* [5-10]. If the term *לכתבי הקודש* includes written texts of questionable sacredness, Scripture written in *targum* fits the bill and the main reason that this interpretation has not been considered seriously enough is that

⁸¹ Friedman, *כל כתבי הקודש*, pp. 332-33; Sussmann, *Talmud Yerushalmi: According to Ms. Or. 4720 (Scol. 3) of the Leiden University Library with Restorations and Corrections* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001), col. 436.

⁸² Following Epstein, *לגרידי הירושלמי*, p. 242; Lieberman, *הירושלמי כפשוטו*, p. 192.

targum has always been considered as excluded from the Holy Writ per its status as Oral Tora.

The holiness of these scrolls takes centre stage in [5]. The Yerushalmi spells out the contrast between the *mishna* [1] and the *baraita* [4]: that certain as yet unspecified scrolls are sacred, hence should be saved from a fire, or that they are not sacred and should not be saved.⁸³ Saving certain scrolls thus depends on whether they defile the hands because they are Holy Writ. This neat dichotomy which has Holy Writ saved but 'other writ' not is falsified by a reference to *m. Yad.* 4.5 in [6] which makes the point that targum is not Holy Writ, yet still saved, which does not comply with either opinion. The objection dissociates the notion of 'defiling the hands' from targum on the basis of *m. Yad.* 4.5 which requires Holy Writ to be written in Ashurit, on parchment, and with ink.⁸⁴ As a result, there are three categories: Holy Writ, targum, and profane documents.

The detachment of targum from Holy Writ is not rebutted by the following statements. First, the anonymous 'we' learn from the initial *mishna* that the withdrawal of targum implicates saving [7], but it is not a refutation; rather, it confirms the peculiar situation that targum is not Holy Writ yet saved from a fire on a shabbat. Whereas *m. Yad.* 4.5 excluded targum from the Holy Writ, this inference from *m. Shab.* 16.1 includes targum among the writ to be saved. Thus the controversy whether they are Holy Writ and saved, or not and not saved, is resolved at both ends (both positions are wrong). This twofold rebuttal moves the debate onwards to new territory as it presses for an intermediate position of written scriptural translations which both the *Mishna* and the *Tosefta* already hinted at but could not realize in full, given the absence of a third category and the inherited and unqualified status of Holy Writ. That the position is intermediate implies that targum still partakes in Holy Writ to a certain degree.

The next statements in [8-9] develop the transitional position of targum. The quotation of *m. Eruv.* 10.3, where R. Shimon exposes the priority

⁸³For rendering the hands unclean, see Vermes et al. (eds.), E. Schürer: *The History*, 11, p. 320 n. 18; S. Friedman, 'The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands—The Transformation of a Biblical Concept in Rabbinic Theology', in M. Brettler and M. Fishbane (eds.), *Minhah le-Nahum: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M. Sarna in Honour of His 70th Birthday* (JSOT.S, 154; Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 117–32 (with further references).

⁸⁴For this *mishna*, see below, section 7.2, esp. pp. 288–90.

of the grace of Holy Writ over the rules of shabbat, makes the obvious point that Holy Writ must be saved and intimates that targum is still included in Holy Writ [8], or more precisely: at the editorial level, this statement is applied to targum as if it were Holy Writ. It is more than plausible that R. Shimon's statement on its own does not refer to targum, but here it has been brought into play in a way that it does—in an interesting exploration of the grace of Holy Writ vis à vis translations, as R. Shimon's view was not generally upheld in its reception history, not even in the Yerushalmi, as regards the Hebrew Scriptures.⁸⁵ All the same, the main reason to introduce his view at this juncture is to make a novel point: saving written Scriptures in translation may be necessitated on the grounds of honour and disgrace, irrespective of their status as Holy Writ in the full sense. The authorial voice confirms the interim state of Scripture which had been written in targum against the views of the sages, arguing that the disgrace of the Holy Writ must be avoided—even if the Holy Writ was not permitted to be written in the language that it was.

The next question extrapolates further details from the reference to R. Shimon's view, as it asks why it was necessary to mention him at all: if anyone agrees that translations are to be saved on the basis of the mishna of tractate Shabbat, why mention the mishna of R. Shimon if it does not state something in addition to what was already known? The Yerushalmi infers that translations in languages other than Greek must have been in circulation, against the wishes of Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel in m. Meg. 1.8, who sought to restrict the Holy Writ in translation to Greek alone [9]. The authorial voice of the Yerushalmi does not deem them desirable.⁸⁶ It even underscores its rejection of translation other than Greek. When the Yerushalmi now relates the precedent of Rabban Gamaliel and the Targum of Job, this case has a different focus from that in the Tosefta. The theme of 'destruction' versus 'storing away' is not brought up. Rather, the story proves the point that only Greek translations are tolerable whereas other translations should be withdrawn from circulation.

The Yerushalmi achieves what neither Mishna nor Tosefta did in creating a position for written translations that allows for their differentiation from the Holy Writ without denying them an honourable status: sacred but not quite as sacred as the Holy Writ itself. Even so, the very fact that

⁸⁵y. Eruv. 10.3, 26b; cf. b. Eruv. 98a–b.

⁸⁶See also section 8.8 below, pp. 427–33.

translations could ever be conceived as defiling the hands cannot be harmonized with the classical opinion that they had always been considered as part and parcel of the Oral Tora by the early rabbis. Apparently both the opinion that translations defile the hands found here, together with the subterfuge of an intermediary position never again enjoyed by written translations since, are traces of a different status as 'Holy Writ' that had once been ascribed to Bible translations.

The Bavli wraps up the discussion of this topic in a stand-off between two Amoraim, Rav Huna and Rav Ḥisda, who each adopt one side of the original dichotomy in the status of *targum* as Holy Writ. I will selectively quote some key moments of the *gemara* below. It opens with the following organized presentation of the issues at stake (b. Shab. 115a, following MS Ox23):

איתמ' היו [כתובים תרגום בכל]⁸⁷ לשון רב הונא אומר אין מצילין אותן מפני הדליקה רב חסדא אומ' מצילין אותן מפני הדליק' אליבא למאן דאמ' (לא) ניתנו לקרות בהן דכולי עלמא לא פליגי דמצילין כי פליגי אליבא דמ' ד לא ניתנו לקרות בהן רב הונא אמ' אין מצילין דהא לא ניתנו לקרות בהן ורב חסדא אמ' מצילין משום⁸⁸ בזיון דכתבי הקדש מצילין⁸⁹ אותן

- [1] It was stated, '[Even if] they are written in *targum* into any language', Rav Huna said, They should not be saved from a fire. Rav Ḥisda said, They may be saved from a fire.
- [2] On the view that they are meant to be recited [in the synagogue], all agree they should be saved. They only disagree on the view that they are not meant to be recited.
- [3] Rav Huna said, They should not save [them] for they are not meant to be recited. But Rav Ḥisda said, They save them, because of the disgrace of the Holy Writ they save them.

The Amoraic difference of opinion could easily have been related to the original *mishna*, which has an ambivalence that allows for two contrasting interpretations, as we observed above. But the Bavli chooses not to present the problem as such, for איתמר 'it was stated' [1] introduces an Amoraic dispute. Only at a later stage in the discussion will the dispute be related

⁸⁷A scribal omission, supplied in the margin of Ox23 and supported by Mun95, TS F2(2)3, Rashi, and R. Ḥananel. Conversely, Vat487 reads תרגום ובכל לשון; Son1489 and Vilna תרגום או בכל לשון.

⁸⁸Mun95 reads משום כתבי הקדש, omitting ד- בזיון.

⁸⁹For מצילין אותן, Vat487, TS F2(2)3 read מצילין; Mun95 and the edns have a minus.

to a Tannaitic difference of opinion (ר' יוסי אומר ...; תנאי היא דתניא ...; see below).

The Bavli's authorial voice first discriminates between two types of translation, one which is fit for recitation and one which is denied the privilege [2]. Tellingly, the subsequent narration never disputes the view that one type of translation is due and proper for liturgical recitation, but neither ever unfolds the use of such translations and the conditions under which their use is deemed acceptable, or the way such scrolls should be produced (such as the representation of the Tetragrammaton). Only aligning the view with m. Meg. 1.8 can suggest that the translations judged fit and proper may be Greek ones. Instead, the argument focuses solely on the category of translations that are held out of bounds for the liturgy.

Some of the Bavli's textual witnesses incorporate a subtle but meaningful change when citing the *mishna*, which agrees semantically with the Tosefta cited above: 'היו כתובים תרגום או בכל לשון' [If] they are written in *targum* or in any language'. The plus of the copula separates *targum* from all other translations, as if *targum* denotes Aramaic and no other language of translation. The *Mishna*, on the other hand, does not, as it reads: 'אף על פי כתובין בכל לשון' 'Even if they are written in any language'. In truth, most witnesses of the Bavli do not introduce the distinction at this position in the text, but on the other hand few do not introduce it at some point in this *sugya*, for the phrase occurs no less than three times. Since the main contenders for scriptural translation were Greek and Aramaic—for the Western and Eastern Diaspora respectively—it is perhaps no surprise that *targum* came to be identified with Aramaic. The real distinction in the *sugya*, however, is between Greek and other languages, not Aramaic, and the distinction may well therefore be relatively late. Whether it is or not, is of no concern for my present purposes. Of slightly greater importance is the Bavli's omission of 'אף על פי', which in the *mishna* weakens the position of the scriptural translation, *although* they were still to be withdrawn. The conjunction seemed to allow for the interpretation that translations require *geniza* but not necessarily saving when such an action would break the *shabbat*.

Above all else, the *Mishna* lumps all of the Holy Writ together, 'whether they recite them or not', whereas the Bavli introduces a division between those scrolls that are recited and those that are not and relates the distinction to those scriptural texts that are 'written in *targum* in any

language'. This distinction puts the performance of scriptural translation with or without recourse to a written text at the heart of the discussion, in other words: the use of translations as either Holy Writ or Oral Tora. In the lengthy discussion that follows the quotation given above, the focus remains on those scrolls that are barred from recitation.

The anonymous, authorial voice then moots its own view as a foil to the positions ascribed to Rav Huna and Rav Ḥisda, which it subsequently plays out. Along the way, it covers the ambivalence of the *mishna* and the legal precedence contained in the *Tosefta*, but through all its reasoning it subtly makes an entirely different point. The *stam* starts with restating the *mishna*, introduced as what 'we have learned', but ends the quotation prematurely: 'All Holy Writings must be saved from a fire, whether we read them or not, even those written in any language'. Since the *stam* thus fails to mention the withdrawal required of translations, it avoids the ambivalence so characteristic of the *Mishna* and reads the clause about translations in one breath with the stipulation to save Holy Writ from a fire. The shortened quote is not an accident or memory ploy. Although abbreviated, incomplete quotations in rabbinic literature commonly hint at a fuller source text which memory serves, in this particular instance the selection and exclusion are significant since the *stam* goes on to repeat and interpret each clause with none given beyond the quotation, while Rav Huna and Rav Ḥisda both supplement an explanation for the omitted clause. So the *stam* augments his selected clauses with brief comments which signal that 'they' recite the Prophets, do not recite the Writings, and should save translations 'even though they are barred from recitation'. It would appear, at first sight, that the *stam* agrees with Rav Ḥisda.

From here on the Bavli structures the remainder of the discussion by the rhetorical question: 'Is this a refutation of Rav Huna?' (וְתִיבְתָּא דְרַב (הוּנָא)). The question occurs three times, each time followed by a conclusive counter-argument until it concludes that a Tannaitic difference of opinion lurks behind Rav Huna's and Rav Ḥisda's dispute. While the Bavli thus does not present Rav Huna as refuted, it also stops short of coming out in favour of his position as it initially did with Rav Ḥisda's opinion. The halakhic question still hangs in the balance. Nevertheless, 'underneath' positions have shifted by the end of the *sugya*. The dichotomy of opinion is no longer tied to m. Shab. 16.1, but to two *baraitot*. Consistent with

this conclusion, the entire *sugya* does not start with the *mishna* (of tractate *Shabbat*).

Among the points raised in the subsequent discussion, the second objection to Rav Huna proves more tenacious:

ת"ש היו כתובין גפסית מדינת עילמית יונית אע"פ שלא ניתנו לקרות בהן מצילין
אותן מפני הדליקה

Come and hear, [If] they are written in Coptic, Median, [palaeo-]Hebrew [script], Elamite or Greek, even though they are not meant to be recited, they must [still] be saved from a fire.

This tradition (which may or may not be a *baraita*) stipulates that certain scriptural translations are unfit for recitation, but still require to be saved.⁹⁰ That the statement applies to sacred scrolls during a fire on a shabbat are details which have not been provided, but follow from the alignment with Rav Huna's view in this discussion. This riposte finally leads us to the endgame, which recycles information already encountered in the *Tosefta* and *Yerushalmi*. The anonymous voice answers once more on Rav Huna's behalf that the conflict is really one between two *Tannaitic* views: the first *baraita*, demanding that translations be saved from a fire, and R. Yose who claims that they should not be saved from a fire (ר' יוסי א"י אין מצילין) (אותן מפני הדליקה).⁹¹ Remarkably, the view ascribed to R. Yose is nothing but an extrapolation from the by now familiar case of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder and the Targum of Job, related by R. Yose at this juncture in the long version also known from the *Tosefta*. From this case, the *stam* infers that R. Yose opposed the saving of any translation, seeing that the *maase* ('precedent') culminates in the withdrawal of a translation. Whether or not R. Yose phrased his opinion as presented here is irrelevant. The editorial or authorial aim of citing this particular precedent at this particular point is to do credit to Rav Huna's view that translations should not be saved, and do not occupy an intermediary position between the Hebrew Holy Writ and any other writings.

The *gemara* concludes with the observation that Rav Huna is supported by the (extrapolated) opinion of the Tanna R. Yose, and Rav Hisda,

⁹⁰Whether this is a genuine *baraita* goes beyond the present discussion. The closest parallel is found in b. Meg. 18a.

⁹¹This very phrase is actually missing in Ox23 and Vat487, but supported by Mun95, Son1489 and Vilna. As the next phrase also starts with 'R. Yose said' it may be a case of haplography; still, the possibility of later augmentation of the text cannot be excluded.

surprisingly, by the *baraita* (if that is what it is) about Coptic rather than the original *mishna*. Only these two opinions are about translations that may not be recited, whereas the original *mishna* and the original *baraita* are about translations that may be recited. As a conclusion, it is revealing. The entire *sugya* is more about the rhetorics of how to align several distinct positions than about practice and the actual status of written translations. Bearing that restriction in mind, it cannot be challenged that some written translations are deemed to be Holy Writ and fit for purpose, even though the Bavli chooses to focus on other Tannaitic traditions which do not consider written *targum* fit for purpose.

In sum, the Bavli sidelines the notion that written translations may be considered Holy Writ, perhaps because it had eventually lost its significance. Both the *Mishna* and the *Tosefta* impart them this status with one hand, but take something back with the other, while the *Yerushalmi* achieves the clearest, albeit transitory, position for Holy Translations that are not quite on a par with the Holy Writ itself. All this suggests that the status of *targum* as Holy Writ had become untenable.

6.4 Consolidating the text of translation

If *targum* shared attributes with the Oral Tora at large, can we relate a degree of stability of these texts to the fluidity and textual multiplicity of the Oral Tora or, alternatively, to the stability of a well-rehearsed oral tradition? The ongoing development of interpretative responses to the Written Tora, which occurred in the oral-discursive context of the rabbinic milieu, received emphasis alongside the view that the Oral Tora had been received at Mt Sinai alongside the Written Tora and transmitted down the generations ever since in unchanged form. Thus the often-cited fluidity of the Oral Tora appears in rabbinic literature side by side with its opposite of textual rigidity, fossilized in memory. Either end of the spectrum is deceptive. Studies of the oral-performative status of the Tora in rabbinic circles have shown that rabbis re-enact the Oral Tora in educational settings which provide for a text that is simultaneously stable and fluid, as a text that is continuously, and literally, put into the mouth of rabbis: they are not just custodians, they are the Oral Tora and provide for both stability and fluidity.

What does this mean for scriptural translations? In the past, the Aramaic targum has been described as a spontaneous process, whereas others emphasized its controlled performance down to the minutiae of translation.⁹² Both characterizations are based on rabbinic statements and attitudes and reflect the two distinct perspectives on the Oral Torah described above. We have next to nothing to go on in terms of Aramaic manuscript evidence for the classical rabbinic period,⁹³ while the Greek evidence is complicated,⁹⁴ with Christian provenance quite clearly preponderant in case of the Septuagint, but even manuscripts of the so-called 'minor versions' might possibly be Christian in origin. Even so, the preservation of Aquila-fragments in the Cairo Geniza demonstrates their use and circulation in Jewish circles regardless of provenance. That said, the primary source of data we can rely on is the selective picture provided by rabbinic literature, which is lacunary in terms of those practices that did not comply with the rabbinic ideals, and fragmentary by the very nature of rabbinic literature, which never goes the length of systematic presentations of topics and opinions.

How does the enactment of targum fit the formation of the Oral Torah? As the painstaking attention to detail in Jewish revisions of the Septuagint demonstrate, and rabbinic attempts at correcting improper Aramaic equivalents underline,⁹⁵ no translation would be permitted the flexibility that characterizes oral literature. Scriptural translations faced

⁹²Cf. R. le Déaut, 'Un phénomène spontané de l'hermeneutique juive ancienne: le targumisme', *Biblica* 52 (1971), pp. 505–525 with P.S. Alexander, 'Jewish Aramaic Translations', in M.J. Mulder and H. Sysling (eds.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), pp. 217–53.

⁹³See now also Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*.

⁹⁴See A. Salvesen, 'A Convergence of the Ways? The Judaizing of Christian Scripture by Origen and Jerome,' in A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2003), pp. 233–58; R. Ceulemans, 'The Greek Christian Afterlife of the Minor Versions: The Possibilities of a Shift in Perspective', in H. Ausloos, B. Lemmelijn, and M. Vervenne (eds.), *Florilegium Lovaniense: Studies in Septuagint and Textual Criticism in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), pp. 101–17; E.L. Gallagher, 'The Religious Provenance of the Aquila Manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza', forthcoming (I thank the author for sharing his article with me).

⁹⁵For the latter, see y. Meg. 4.1, 74d and y. Bik. 3.8(5), 65d in section 8.7, esp. pp. 422–26 below.

scrutiny of their fidelity to the Hebrew original, which they were required to represent accurately. From at least the start of the common era onwards the early Greek translations were subjected to intensive comparison with the Hebrew source text. As a mirror of the original Scriptures, they were meant to be accurate in ways unlike a loose re-enactment of the narrative, but of precise representation of the narrative order of the original text and by and large all its lexemes. Translations are put under the constraints of an *exemplar*, which guides the strategies adopted in each of these translations, no matter how different they are. In such a climate, translations were not the result of impromptu interpretation, not even in an oral-performative context. The main purpose of the Oral Tora as a body of learning and instruction best acquired in personal emulation of one's master does not ideally fit a translation, whether in Aramaic, Greek or any other language, unless conceived of as a written composition which is, perhaps interminably, assessed in the oral-discursive context of the rabbinic environment. In its Aramaic form, *targum* became the oral instantiation of the Written Tora as well as a carefully drafted version of the Oral Tora to be memorized for liturgical use. The ambivalence is historical, for the rabbis insisted on a distinction between writ and oral interpretation, and ultimately developed a theory and practice of translation in which a carefully composed Aramaic version would become the oral face of the Written Tora as filtered by the Oral Tora.

Accordingly, the oral-performative translation required rote learning when a fixed tradition for the Aramaic translation became *de rigueur*. The tradition indeed projects the image of such a practice and it has become common among scholars to accept that image as the norm. Yet for the early stages of the oral-performative translation we cannot rule out a practice of extemporaneous translation which was governed by internalized translation strategies. The question is: what proof do we have? Preciously little if anything at all. There is only one discussion that touches upon the subject of fluid versus fixed interpretation: the classic *baraita* of R. Yehuda bar Ilai about the pitfalls of translation. In the Tosefta,⁹⁶ R. Yehuda bar Ilai would agree with the classical understanding of interpretative fidelity, taken in terms of rhetorics rather than scribal copying, but in its Babylonian reception his position is narrowed down (b. Qid. 49a).

⁹⁶For the version of the Tosefta, see above, pp. 164–67.

The context of the *baraita* concerns the conditions which a bridegroom specifies for his own betrothal:

תנו רבנן⁹⁷ על מנת שאני קריינא כיון שקרא שלשה פסוקים בבית הכנסת הרי זו מקודשת ר' יהודה אומר עד שיקרא ויתרגם יתרגם⁹⁸ מדעתיה והתניא ר' יהודה אומר המתרגם פסוק כצורתו הרי זה בדאי והמוסיף עליו הרי זה מחרף ומגדף אלא מאי תרגום תרגום דידן

Our rabbis taught, 'On the condition that I can recite', as soon as he recites three verses in the synagogue, he is betrothed.

R. Yehuda used to say, Once he recites and interprets.

[Even if] he interprets of his own accord?

Has it not been taught, R. Yehuda said, Whoever interprets a verse plainly is a liar, whoever adds something to it a blasphemer and a reviler.

Then what is translation? Our translation.

The *sugya* discusses the bridegroom-to-be's self-imposed condition that he should be able to recite Scripture. The anonymous voice contrasts the condition of 'our rabbis' who set the minimum requirement for the bridegroom at the ability to recite at least three verses with R. Yehuda's alternative condition that he should be capable not just to recite but also to interpret. R. Yehuda's quotation does not specify the length of his performance. Key in this short dialogue is the objection, 'even if he translates of his own accord?' Although Rashi read *מדעתיה* אפי' יתרגם, the word אפילו 'even' is (so far) not supported by other textual witnesses,⁹⁹ yet clearly implied. Its occurrence in Rashi's quotation may be the result of glossing at some point of the tractate's textual history. In any case, the anonymous interlocutor questions the youth's ability to interpret the Torah independently, with perhaps the technical sense to translate at his level of maturity and insight but ultimately translating without any guidance. This interpretative skill is contrasted with the competence to reproduce 'our' translation, which implies an approved, controlled and memorized version. The anonymous voice sets any translation *מדעתיה* 'of his own accord' off against one that is *דידן* 'ours'.

By implication, the interlocutor(s) believed that R. Yehuda's ruling could be understood as an allusion to the practice of improvised, extemporaneous translation; by the same token the anonymous scrutator

⁹⁷ VatIII and Guad do not support תנו רבנן; Ox248, Mun95, Ven and Vilna do.

⁹⁸ In Ox248 יתרגם is missing due to homoioteleuton.

⁹⁹ אפילו is not attested in Mun95, VatIII, Ox248 or the edns.

rejects such an uncontrolled interpretation. Admittedly, R. Yehuda may only have insisted that the young man must understand what the Hebrew says rather than blindly reproduce its text, but the authorial voice of the Bavli seeks to counter the resulting possibility of individual translations by referring to the delicately balanced translation which he advanced as the ideal on another occasion. Playing off this second *baraita* against the first, the Bavli refutes the possibility of unauthorized translation and propagates the excellence of the Aramaic translations which the Babylonian rabbis had approved: 'our translation'. Later tradition canonized this view.

Time and culture stand between the *baraita* as preserved in the Tosefta and its anonymous resolution in the Bavli. In the rhetorical mould of the Tosefta, R. Yehuda's *baraita* alluded to a fluid, indefinite translation that would never have to be completely solidified. Yet the textual reception of t. Meg. 3.41 already demonstrated that the sense of rhetorical variation his topos on translational fidelity once involved was soon lost on later readers. The Bavli takes the line that R. Yehuda's stance on translation only left room for the one translation that met his demanding standards. Injecting 'our translation' into R. Yehuda's rhetorics, the Bavli neutralizes the practice of extemporaneous translation. But the timing of this reception is more problematic. We cannot be too certain that the views expressed in b. Qid. 49a are early, if only because they have been transmitted anonymously. In terms of textual redaction it should be noted that R. Yehuda requires both reading and interpreting, which disagrees with rabbinic rules for the delivery of the translation in public (בצבור). Unless R. Yehuda ideates a performance outside the synagogue, in contrast to 'our rabbis', he probably refers to the mere ability to perform both recitation and interpretation (but at separate occasions), else this *baraita* contradicts the rule that one may not read and translate in one go. As it does not belong to the original discussion about reciting *miqra* in the synagogue, R. Yehuda's first statement—just as his second—has been brought into play with the discussion of 'our rabbis' in later rabbinic reflection, possibly, but not necessarily, involving the editorial hand of the *stammaim*. Hence the emphatic confirmation of 'our translation' is a relatively late and not even necessarily Amoraic development. Whether the Bavli refers to Targum Onqelos here, as is commonly assumed and signalled by Rabbenu Hananel, cannot be deemed certain. No identification is provided, and the term 'our translation', a variation on the more common expression 'as we

interpret', is unique to this passage.¹⁰⁰ But it scarcely matters. The point is that 'our' translation is the only translation that carries the stamp of rabbinic approval.

These differences between fluid and secured states of text aside, both R. Yehuda and the anonymous voice of the Bavli understand *targum* as Oral Torah. As a consolidated, secured text, however, *targum* tends to approximate the category of the Written Torah. The Masora to Onqelos—there is no known Masora to Targum Jonathan, nor to the Palestinian Targums—represent one approach to the control of the textual transmission of Targums.¹⁰¹ Their nature differs from the Masoretic Masora in a number of ways. The focus on questions of translation strategies, clearly from the vantage ground of the whole text in both its Hebrew and Aramaic form, points to a sustained effort to maintain awareness of apparent irregularities in its text. Crucially, these notes are aimed at the text's oral *Gestalt*, as they single out the euphemisms to be used in and the verses to be omitted from translation in public. The Masora reflects the oral nature of the Aramaic translation, while simultaneously suggesting a relatively fixed state of the text. By a fitting irony, the oral performance of Targum Onqelos was guided by written notations. Written texts served both as mnemonic aids and as safeguards to preserve the acclaimed translation in its exact wording. They will have fulfilled a function for the study of Targum in the weekly preparation of the Torah reading,¹⁰² and for the *meturgeman* in his memorization. A similar function may be ascribed to the peculiar cribs of Onqelos, two shorthand manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections, which would have been of help to those who were learning the text and needed a prompter in perfecting their performance from memory. The Masora consolidates the oral text.¹⁰³

The relatively low position of translation in rabbinic learning finds expression in the continuation of the *gemara* of b. Qid. 49a, when the rabbis raise the bar for those who claim a higher degree of learning: if the young man claims to be a [experienced] reader, 'he must be able to

¹⁰⁰R. Hananel, as cited by Tos. b. Qid. 49a, applies the term 'our translation' to a translation of Exod. 24.10 found in Onqelos, and marked as: הכי מתרגמי 'So we interpret'. For another reference of R. Hananel to 'our *targum*', see p. 167 above.

¹⁰¹M.L. Klein, 'The Masorah to Onqelos: A Reflection of Targumic Consciousness', *HUCA* 68 (1997), pp. 63–75; Klein, *The Masorah*.

¹⁰²Sifre Deut. 161; b. Ber. 8a–b; ARN B 12.

¹⁰³Klein, *Targumic Manuscripts*, pp. 85 no. 1088, 86 no. 1098.

read the Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa with exactitude', and so on, until law, Sifra, Sifre and Tosefta are included. The ability to translate resides in the lower spheres of learning and above all in the realm of the Written Tora. Translation occupies a border-line position between the elementary instruction in Scripture and the more advanced studies of the oral tradition.¹⁰⁴

Elsewhere targum occupies a similar border-line position between the Oral and the Written Tora. The rabbinic study of the Tora consisted of Scripture, Targum, Mishna and Talmud, in that order (Sifre Deut. 161). Depending on perspective, targum could be categorized with Scripture over against other oral teachings. In the context of remuneration for those teaching the Tora (y. Ned. 4.3, 38c), Scripture and translation (מקרא ותרגום) are contrasted with 'laws and rules' (חוקים ומשפטים) that must be taught without pay. This bipartite categorization of rabbinic instruction, which falls apart into legal instruction (which should go without remuneration) and scriptural instruction (which may be remunerated) is a reminder of the ambiguous status translation naturally has. While targum falls to one side in this particular categorization, it does not always fall that way.

The ambivalence of targum is the topic of the final comment in Sifra שמיני 1.9. The scriptural verse under discussion is Lev. 10.9-11, which warns priests not to be intoxicated when they enter the Tent of Meeting because they must be able 'to distinguish between the holy and the profane, the unclean and the clean' and they 'must teach the Israelites all the laws which the LORD has imparted to them through Moses'. Sifra relates every detail of these verses to priestly activities (assessing Temple offerings and establishing purity and impurity) and legal instructions, all of which require a clear state of mind. As Fraade points out, the different text-forms of Sifra in its last clauses appear to reflect different views of targum as a halakhic source for legal instruction.¹⁰⁵ Some versions include targum among the sources which require avoidance of intoxication (מניין אף), whereas others exclude it (יכול אף התרגום). Similarly, some exclude

¹⁰⁴York, 'The Targum in the Synagogue'. See also Alexander, 'Jewish Aramaic Translations', pp. 238-41; Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views', pp. 262-65.

¹⁰⁵S.D. Fraade, 'Scripture, Targum, and Talmud as Instruction: A Complex Textual Story from the Sifra', in J. Magness and S. Gitin (eds.), *Hesed Ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 109-22. Note that the Aramaic/Hebrew text at pp. 116 and 120 is flawed. See also Berliner, *Targum Onkelos*, II, pp. 83-84.

Scripture but include *talmud*, whereas others revert the situation. Which version is original is hardly the point here. The variation shows that *targum* was sometimes considered a ‘source for juridical instruction with practical consequences’ which implies its fluidity rather than consolidation.¹⁰⁶ This high opinion of *targum* does not occur in the Bavli, nor in the Sheiltot,¹⁰⁷ but in some manuscripts of Sifra and even then only hesitantly, almost as an afterthought.

Oscillating between the Written and Oral Tora, *targum* moved between fixed and fluid texts and between geographic locations. At this juncture I recall the difference of terminology with regard to the verb תרגם. In the Bavli, this verb denotes the authoritative interpretation in the realm of *halakha*. The use of the verb תרגם for both translation and authoritative interpretation expresses the close link between the two largely oral activities. The acclaimed *targumic* versions were considered in the same light. In the Yerushalmi, however, there is no central and authoritative Aramaic translation while there was an acclaimed, and written, Greek version. Thus, for the Palestinian sages the verb תרגם did not connote the oral, authoritative and halakhic aspects in the way it did to their Babylonian peers. Note that the corrections of translational equivalents deemed unacceptable by R. Yona, Yirmeya and R. Pinḥas—implying attempts to consolidate a fluid translation—are only transmitted in the Yerushalmi.¹⁰⁸ These differences, it should be stressed, are not absolute but relative. Even the fluid text of *targum* does not represent a spontaneous translation, but was guided by rabbinic traditions, while the authority of the more fixed *targum* remained limited: it is an authority over and against other translations, but not vis à vis the Written Tora or the *halakha*.

6.5 The paradigm shift

In this chapter I argued that the unstable border position of scriptural translations between Written and Oral Tora points to a shift of paradigm, which becomes transparent if we understand the oral status of *targum* as a

¹⁰⁶ Fraade, ‘Scripture, Targum, and Talmud’, pp. 114, 118.

¹⁰⁷ b. Ker. 13b; cf. b. Ber. 5b. For the Sheiltot, see col. קלב in S.K. Mirsky, שאילתות, iv (Jerusalem: Sura Research and Publication Foundation, Yeshiva University, and Mosad Harav Kook, 1966).

¹⁰⁸ y. Meg. 4.1, 74d [par. y. Bik. 3.5, 65d]; see pp. 422–26 below.

novelty introduced and, in the long run, widely accepted after a process of discussion that is still discernible in the rabbinic sources. While scriptural translations existed in written form and attained the status of Holy Writ, their position also varied with their language, period and location of use. It is important to stress that we do not know exactly how their position varied with social context, in particular between rabbinic and non-rabbinic influence circles, but within rabbinic Judaism we have seen that their status oscillates between Written and Oral Tora. Certain scriptural translations were deemed fit to be used for liturgical purposes whereas others were not, but we do not know under which specific conditions these views on *targum* applied to actual translations or how widespread any variations were in practice and opinion. The discussions about the rescue of written *targum* from a fire on shabbat do not specify which translations they applied to, but other rabbinic sources single out Greek translations as particularly eligible for the fulfilment of religious duties;¹⁰⁹ and yet Greek may not have been the only language to enjoy such privilege since the anonymous voice view in m. Meg. 1.8 extends it to any language. Still, details about lesser known translations have not come down to us other than traces: short and generic references to translation in any language, or to Coptic, Median and Elamite, which may, in their current occurrences, no longer represent anything more than virtual positions taken in a rhetorical discourse.

A silence transpires beyond the detail of translation: the prominent part played by written translations in Late Antiquity, especially in Greek-speaking environments, hardly received full acknowledgement in our sources, which fail to express their positive contribution to Jewish liturgy. That they confine themselves instead to the issue of rescue and withdrawal of scriptural translation signals their suppression. True, they admit the existence of written liturgical translations despite the rabbinic ideal of an oral-performative translation, but in conceding them a degree of holiness they diverge; in point of fact, they tend to emit conflicting opinions even within a single document.

Traditionally classified as 'Holy Writ' that should be saved from a fire on a Sabbath, by the late Tannaitic era this view on written translations and the written documents themselves had become highly controversial, resulting in unstable or irresolute discussions of the *mishna* in m. Shab. 16.1 and parallels. Although m. Shab. 16.1 privileges the interpretation

¹⁰⁹ See section 5.2, p. 185 above.

that translations are included among the scrolls to be saved from a fire even on a shabbat, the ambivalence in its wording hints at and allows for the very opposite view that written translations should be excluded from any rescue attempt. This latter view recognizes in translation a category of writing that is to remain distinct from the Holy Writ in the holy tongue. In its different way, the Tosefta signals the same irresoluteness by first following the interpretation that written targum requires to be saved, but only to be undercut by the subsequent discussion that expresses the very opposite opinion. The Yerushalmi makes clear what is at stake by declaring that at least some sages maintained that the translations defile the hands, but ultimately achieves a solution in the form of targum as a halfway house between the sacred and the profane. The Bavli plays off different arguments in a highly rhetorically fashioned unit which explores the feasibility of a halfway house like that expressed in the Yerushalmi, but does not challenge the view that some written scriptural translations were deemed fit for recitation and as a result required saving.

Moving from the view that reflects the liturgical status written translations once enjoyed to the rabbinic ideal of an interpreter who orally performs a translation he had learned by rote, rabbinic opinion would ultimately embrace and affirm the latter position, which restricts the use of translations to an optional provision for non-Hebrew speakers but at no point replaces the original text. Between these two stages an intermediary situation existed, which had rabbis on the one hand require the withdrawal of Scripture written in targum for the purpose of liturgical use, namely as Holy Writ, and had them, on the other hand, demote such translation to a status of lesser holiness. This halfway house came about because the concept of targum as Oral Torah had not yet come to full fruition by the end of the Tannaitic period—the notion of Oral Torah has been attributed to Amoraim alone, which suggests that the concept underwent development in the early centuries CE¹¹⁰—and older views still had to give way to newer developments. All this brought about conflicting views and intricate compromises and gave rise to unstable positions of scriptural translations in document form.

The vacillation of targum between sacred and non-sacred Scripture thus follows from a transition from one view on translations to another. The unsteadiness in status may be explained in two non-exclusive ways:

¹¹⁰Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, p. 98 and *passim*.

diachronically as the result of an earlier leniency to scriptural translations which was replaced by stricter application of the new concept of Oral Tora and synchronically as the reality underlying the idealization of the rabbis, whose prescriptions should not be mistaken for descriptions. The cautious and unsteady balance between *targum* as Holy Writ and as Oral Tora allows a more dimensional view of rabbinic thoughts on translation. In the next chapter, 'Ashurit and Alphabet', I will focus on rabbinic texts that evince both conflict and transition and marshal additional notions against the liturgical use of written translations.

On circumstantial evidence, Greek translations were the prime candidates for liturgical use, though not exclusively so (*m. Meg.* 1.8), as they enjoyed a traditional status the rabbis could not easily dispense with. That status was not to remain. The sources indicate that the rabbis did not endorse Greek translations without some reservation. In the previous chapter it emerged that the obligation to read the scroll of Esther can only be fulfilled by reading from the Hebrew according to the *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* in their discussion of *m. Meg.* 2.1. All translations, therefore, remain optional. Especially but not exclusively in non-Greek speaking environments, a marked distance to Greek translations evolved. The desire to keep the Oral Tora an untranslated 'mystery' and thereby maintain a difference for people who used Greek translations, as expressed by Amoraic sources,¹¹¹ attests to the fact that Greek translations had become non-Jewish documents in the view of the rabbis. To what extent a Greek or any other translation was out of fashion by Geonic times, at least in rabbinic eyes, when the making of the Septuagint could be compared to the making of the golden calf (*Sof.* 1.7), will concern us in the next chapter, 'Ashurit and Alphabet'.

Why did Gamaliel the Elder hide the Targum of Job? If the concept of Oral Tora was not yet in force as far as the Aramaic versions were concerned, and written copies were deemed acceptable, a different explanation for his behaviour must be suggested. The problem is that we know too little. We cannot rule out that he anticipated later developments, but we cannot prove it either. According to the narrative, for some reason the scroll was brought to him for inspection, but the reason remains opaque, as there is no mention made of any objection to its contents or to its physical

¹¹¹*b. Meg.* 3a; *Tan.* וירא 5; כי תשא 34; *TanB.* לך לך 6; *Pes. R.* 5; cf. *y. Pea* 2.6, 17a; *y. Hag.* 1, 74d.

state (it may have been so worn as to be withdrawn from circulation). There is likewise no indication whatsoever why he ordered the Targum of Job to be stored away.¹¹² Whether the translation was written in Greek or Aramaic, we do not know. But all this may well be the point. The historical reasons for inspection and suppression may not have carried any importance for the anonymous voice in the rabbinic sources, for at the editorial level, the only, but forceful, conclusion we can infer from the story is that he objected to the scroll's very existence as a written translation. And it was this similarity that reportedly led his grandchild to put it away too, although he had been reading it at first without objection. Even their very existence in writing was no longer uniformly tolerated for translations, as the objections were not restricted to their use in the synagogue, but even applied to their very circulation in written form. In the background of this development looms the emerging concept of the Targums as Oral Torah. The (short-lived?) opposition to written copies highlights the new, rabbinic, and unequivocal insistence on both the primary nature of the Hebrew text and the expository nature of any translation.

These conclusions shed new light on the provenance of the Targums. It has long been commonplace to refer to the dwindling use and understanding of Hebrew as the people's vernacular as the *raison d'être* of the Targums. But for a targum, the Hebrew was allegedly not understood any longer. In recent years the long-standing assumption that the oral-performative translation into Aramaic was a well-established practice during the first two centuries CE has been called into question.¹¹³ At the time there was not yet a standardized lectionary system for the liturgy. The rabbis were still struggling to gain control of the synagogue, which renders any projection of their preferences onto synagogue practices untenable without further evidence. The language map of Palestine in this early period is so complicated, characterized by forms of multilingualism in which either Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic took pride of place, that a uniform regularization which includes a prescribed interpretation in Aramaic must

¹¹²The Tosefta does not utilize the term גג but גג for the story of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, in contrast to that of his grandchild, but both Talmuds use the latter term.

¹¹³R. Kasher, 'The Aramaic Targumim and their Sitz im Leben', in M.H. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem 1985). Panel session: Bible Studies and Ancient Near East (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 75–85 (78); Safrai, 'The Origins of Reading'; Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, pp. 1–41, 180–88, 634–38 and 656; Alexander, 'How Did the Rabbis Learn'.

be deemed unlikely. The actual practice of oral translation in the Palestinian synagogues may have varied by region, community and generation, with some synagogues reading the Tora in Greek,¹¹⁴ others in Aramaic, Hebrew, or a combination of all these languages.¹¹⁵ In consequence, it is more reasonable to assume that a standardized version of the Targum, in combination with precise regulations for its recitation, was only introduced into the synagogue service during the second half of the second century CE. This hypothesis coalesces with the change of status ascribed to the scriptural translations in this period.

Advancing the use of Hebrew as the exclusive language for reading the Tora would immediately have raised the question of the status of the Aramaic and Greek translations. Because these translations were being treated as Scripture in many synagogues, and had been in use for many generations, they could not simply be rejected and taken out of circulation. Nonetheless the rabbis succeeded in insisting upon Hebrew as the exclusive language of Scriptural readings. By the Byzantine era the Tora was being read in Hebrew in Greek synagogues, while the use of Greek translations had become controversial. This result seems to have been achieved by promulgating the Targum as part of the Oral Tora, rendering all translations optional and circumscribing the use of written Greek copies. Simultaneously, extant translations were being revised and brought under rabbinic control, resulting in the versions of Aquila, Symmachus and the 'official', or 'Babylonian' Targums. These Targums now represented the public face of rabbinic discourse to the wider audience of synagogue attendants, the gateway between synagogue and academy, thus spreading the authorized reception of the Hebrew Bible. To set their seal on the synagogue liturgy the rabbis required to read the Tora in Hebrew and accorded the translation the emphatic status of Oral Tora.

¹¹⁴N. de Lange, 'Prier et étudier à Byzance', REJ 158 (1999), pp. 51–59; N. de Lange, 'A Thousand Years of Hebrew in Byzantium', in Horbury (ed.), *Hebrew Study*, pp. 147–61. On Jewish liturgy in Greek, see J.H. Charlesworth, 'Jewish liturgies, Hymns and Prayers (c. 167 BCE–135 CE)', in R.A. Kraft and G.W.E. Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Post-Biblical Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985); Van der Horst, 'Neglected Greek Evidence', pp. 278–96.

¹¹⁵Vermes et al., *Schürer: The History*, III.1, pp. 142–44; Aaron, 'Judaism's Holy Language', pp. 81–87; Smelik, 'Language Distribution', in C. Hezser (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Palestine* (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 122–41.

Ashurit and alphabet

אמ' ר' יונתן דבית־גוברין ארבעה לשונות נאים שישתמש בהן העולם ואילו הן לעז
לזמר רומי לקרב סורסי לאיליית עברי לדיבור ויש אומ' אף אשורי לכתב אשורי יש
לו כתב ואין לו לשון עברי יש לו לשון ואין לו כתב בחרו להם כתב אשורי ולשון עברי
ולמה נקרא שמו אשורי שהוא מאושר בכתבו אמ' ר' לוי על שם שעלה בידם מאשור

Said R. Yonatan of Beth Guvrin, Four languages are appropriately used in the world, and these are, every day speech [= Greek] for song, Latin for war, Aramaic for wailing, Hebrew for discourse.

And some say, also Ashurit [= Assyrian] for writing. Ashurit has a script but no language, whereas Hebrew has a language but no script. They chose for themselves the Ashurit script and the Hebrew language.

Why is [this script] called 'Ashurit'? Because it is straight in [its mode of] writing. Said R. Levi, Because it came up with them from Ashur.¹

So many passages in rabbinic literature dwell on issues of script that it repays our efforts to consider the relevance of script for the discussion of language selection and the written production of scriptural texts. In this chapter I will argue that the rabbinic insistence on using the square script is designed to promote the use of Hebrew for the Scriptures. That the scope for scriptural translations would thereby be hemmed in comes as no surprise on the back of the previous chapters which already evinced that very tendency, despite the popular need for scriptural translation or the rabbinic aim to sharpen semantic skills and exercise hermeneutical wit.

Between the Babylonian Exile and the end of the Bar Kokhba period, Hebrew texts were written in two different scripts: a late form of the old Hebrew script, itself a descendant of the proto-Canaanite script, and the square or 'Jewish' script, which rabbinic sources call Ashurit. The latter evolved from the Aramaic script and reflects the influence of international administration and trade during the Babylonian and Persian periods, and it would eventually supersede the old Hebrew script. The distinction

¹y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b (par. y. Sot. 7.2, 21c); cf. Est. R. 4.12; Midr. Ps. 31.7. This chapter is a revised version of a keynote I delivered at the 4th Congress of the IOTS, Leiden 2004.

between script and language also emerges from b. San. 97b which speaks of a scroll of Esther *הקדש ובלשון אשורית כתובא* 'written in Ashurit and the holy tongue' in the Roman archives.²

In the Yerushalmi passage quoted above, some of these historical circumstances are reflected in the recognition that the 'square' script originated in an Aramaic-speaking environment³ but had become the script of choice for Hebrew texts. The four featured languages were prevalent in the Tannaitic period, and the passage, although highly stylized, probably echoes the dominant usage of each: Latin as the language of the military superpower, Rome, Greek as the language of culture, Aramaic as the vernacular of the indigenous people and Hebrew as the medium of the [rabbinic] scholars.

Yet the claim that Hebrew has no script of its own finds its place slightly too easily in the account of languages and script. Despite the fact that every Hebrew text was probably scripted in Ashurit by the second half of the second century CE, at least some of the sages still knew that there once existed a (palaeo-)Hebrew script called 'Hebrew' (עברי), leaving little doubt about its original status as the script in which every Hebrew text was written. And not without reason: up to the Bar Kokhba period the עברי script was used on coins, in epitaphs and, for writing the Tetragrammaton, in Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, not to mention the Samaritan tradition which continues to use (a form of) this script down to today. Long after the failed revolt this script must have remained visible in Palestinian epigraphical artefacts, if not in manuscript evidence.

Why, then, does this passage deny a script to Hebrew, and by the same token the Aramaic language to Ashurit? The reason for this blunt denial may become apparent in a comparative analysis of the rabbinic traditions about the origin of Ashurit. For the pragmatic acknowledgement that the Jewish script had its provenance in Assyria colludes with other ideologically charged, and contrafactual, rabbinic views on the origin and authenticity of Ashurit. These traditions, to be considered in more detail below, claim that Ashurit—if not the authentic script all along which had only been abandoned in the face of Israel's sins—was authorized by no one less than Ezra, whose status equalled that of Moses. There is little historical merit in these traditions as far as the script is concerned, and

²Quoting the version of ms Flor, but the differences are minimal.

³Assyria or Syria.

they are mutually exclusive. Yet all of them agree at one point: Ashurit is the script to be used for any ritually valid document, unless stated otherwise. Consequently, the Yerushalmi's narrative at the beginning of this chapter is ostensibly true and sensible, but in fact straight-faced, as it conceals the challenge to the authenticity and legitimacy of Ashurit for writing the Tora and megillat Esther, let alone for tefillin and mezuzot. The urge to validate the square script is the prime mover behind all these traditions.

The distinction between script and language did not result in a continuing separation of script and language, seemingly so naturally welded together in the vast majority of literary cultures.⁴ Almost simultaneously with the distinction, Ashurit came to denote the Hebrew language—or more precisely, aural Hebrew read out aloud from a text written in the square script: 'if he recites [the book of Esther] in Ashurit, those who understand [Ashurit] and those who do not understand [it] thereby fulfil their obligation' (t. Meg. 2.6; cf. m. Meg. 2.2). The script denotes the language here.⁵ Such a process of fusing script and language may help explain a few other incongruities in late Second Temple literature. Both Josephus and the Gospel of John mark Aramaic words as Hebrew; unless they refer to an intertwined language,⁶ 'Hebrew' here appears to be a misguided translation of Ashurit. The use of palaeo-Hebrew for Aramaic inscriptions is less likely, although not unprecedented.⁷ Conversely, Philo's designation 'Chaldaean' (Χαλδαϊκός) for the Tora, when he clearly refers to Hebrew, may refer to a similar shorthand for the Ashurit script, again confusing script with language.⁸ Whatever the confusion, script and language are inextricably linked in the perception of their users.

On the other hand, the historical awareness that the Jewish script and Hebrew language had distinct histories soon proved so useful that it even threatened to take centre stage in an entirely different context. In the question whether written Bible translations were permitted for

⁴See, however, the observations by S.L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009) on the development of Hebrew and its script as a process which is not self-evident but requires explanation.

⁵Midr. Ps. 31.7 replaces 'Hebrew for speech' by 'Ashurit for prayer'.

⁶See the discussion above, p. 110.

⁷J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), pp. 120–21.

⁸Philo, *Vita de Mosis*, 2.39–40.

the fulfilment of religious obligations and the recitation of Scripture,⁹ stipulations about the script turned out to be a powerful tool in the hands of those who did not want translations to take on (or continue to play) a major role. Insisting upon the use of Ashurit, which was a requirement only in the context of Hebrew texts, they attempted to prevent any leeway to use languages other than Hebrew. This argument was not an intended consequence of the insistence upon Ashurit, and indeed remained controversial throughout the centuries. But, the effect is clearly discernable in the reception history of m. Meg. 1.8 and 2.1, two mishnayot which deal with the ritually acceptable language of Scriptures.

To illustrate in what imaginative ways the distinction between script and language could be applied to demarcate the use of Bible translations, Rashba's opinion is once again instructive. When he argued that the holy tongue is not Hebrew *per se*,¹⁰ he qualified this observation by claiming that the holy tongue is Ashurit.¹¹ This he inferred from b. Meg. 18a, which allows megillat Esther to be recited in 'Coptic to the Copts and Hebrew to the Hebrews'. Thus the possibility arises for a translation¹² to be considered as the 'holy tongue' if, and only if, scripted in Ashurit. This was not a mere theoretical possibility. Rashba, who seems to agree with Maimonides and Rashi (but not Nachmanides), forces us to rethink the *raison d'être* of those Greek Bible translations which are scripted in Ashurit, such as have been preserved in the Cairo Geniza. These manuscripts (and their square counterparts in Arabic) may be explained as specimens of the rabbinic insistence on Ashurit against the backdrop of the unwillingness, or rather inability, to prohibit written translations altogether. Contrary to previous assumptions, it is highly unlikely that the scribes responsible for these texts did not know how to write in the Greek or Arabic alphabets so ubiquitous in the world which they inhabited.¹³ Their preservation of Hebrew lemmata also attests to the liturgical function of these manuscripts.

⁹Which is not itself stipulated by the Tora.

¹⁰See p. 43 above.

¹¹At b. Meg. 8b; he infers from m. Meg. 2.1 the conclusion that the holy tongue, whatever the language, is always Ashurit.

¹²The discussion is primarily related to the Scroll of Esther, not to Ezra and Daniel's Aramaic portions.

¹³See TS Misc. 28.74, published by De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*, pp. 71–78. Each verse is preceded by a Hebrew lemma, just as in case of the Targumim. While it is written in square script, it is not written in a liturgical fashion (it is vocalized, and the tittels etc.

7.1 The origin of Ashurit

Why the new square script was favoured over the old, traditional one remains unclear. As Naveh observed, 'there existed in ancient times a strong bond between a language and its script' and religious literature in general shows few parallels for the character change of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ The change of script was considered radical in later rabbinic speculation about the sanctity of Ashurit. While modern authors speak of evolution not revolution,¹⁵ they still express surprise at the abandonment of the traditional script.¹⁶ In general terms the historical background is clear enough, but the details remain elusive. Ever since the Assyrians started to use Aramaic for official communications, the language developed into the *lingua franca* of the Middle East, including Judah, in particular after the return from the Babylonian Exile. The influence of the international Aramaic culture on Judah probably was an important factor in the change of script. For biblical texts, the shift to Ashurit may well have been a slow and inconspicuous process during which both scripts were used simultaneously,¹⁷ but it should be stressed that this remains unproven.¹⁸ There is no manuscript evidence for the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods to support this or any other assumption.¹⁹ The few biblical texts written in Palaeo-Hebrew characters, which were found at Qumran, represent

are missing) although De Lange suggests it might have been used for study or liturgical purposes. The selection of script as a socio-ethnic marker is another possibility.

¹⁴Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, p. 114. See now also S. Naeh, 'על כתב התורה בדברי חז"ל (א): המסורת על החלפת הכתב בידי עזרא על, *Leshonenu* 70 (2008), pp. 125–43; S. Naeh, 'על כתב התורה בדברי חז"ל (ב): תעתיקים וקוצים', *Leshonenu* 72 (2010), pp. 89–123.

¹⁵J. Naveh, 'Hebrew Texts in Aramaic Script in the Persian Period?', *BASOR* 203 (1971), pp. 27–32 (32).

¹⁶See, e.g., S.A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts* (repr. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), pp. 70–75; Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, p. 112; A. Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script: History, Palaeography, Script Styles, Calligraphy & Design* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1997), pp. 41–44.

¹⁷Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, p. 122. Cf. E. Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), p. 237.

¹⁸Naveh, 'Hebrew Texts in Aramaic Script', p. 29.

¹⁹The silver scrolls containing the priestly blessing in palaeo-Hebrew script, dated to the 7th or 6th c. BCE, may have been amulets. See G. Barkay, 'The Priestly Benediction on the Ketef Hinnom Plaques', *Cathedra* 52 (1989), pp. 37–76 (Hebrew); M.C.A. Korpel, 'The Poetic Structure of the Priestly Blessing', *JSOT* 45 (1989), pp. 3–13; A. Yardeni, 'Remarks on the Priestly Blessing on Two Ancient Amulets from Jerusalem', *VT* 41 (1991), pp. 176–85.

relatively late specimens, written in an evolved style of Palaeo-Hebrew.²⁰ Although it follows that both scripts were used side by side at this period, the interpretation of these data is not self-evident, and we cannot simply extrapolate these conditions to the Persian period.

Initially, it was widely believed that the palaeo-Hebrew biblical texts revealed a preference for the ancient script on the part of the Qumran sect.²¹ Awaiting further research into the provenance of the scrolls, this no longer seems to be a realistic scenario. If any scroll reflects the activity of a Qumran sect, these scrolls were probably not among them. They do not share the typical characteristics in orthography, morphology and scribal practices that appear to characterize the manuscripts identified as sectarian.²² Some scholars hold the view that the old script was reintroduced during the Hasmonaean era, primarily on the basis of internal developments within the script.²³ But the evidence is not conclusive because we have no papyri or leather fragments for the Persian period. Moreover, if the Tora had been written exclusively in Ashurit at one point, longer or shorter after the exile, we must perforce assume a similar reintroduction of the old script for the Samaritan Tora. Since seal impressions, jar-handles and coins from the Persian period point to the continued use of palaeo-Hebrew,²⁴ it seems the more simple solution to assume that both scripts were used simultaneously in the Persian period. On this assumption, the Samaritans retained this script, whereas the new Jewish square script gained more and more ground in Jewish circles. By implication, some copies of the Tora were written in Ashurit in the Persian period, whether or not at the time of

²⁰See R.S. Hanson, 'Paleo-Hebrew Scripts in the Hasmonaean Age', *BASOR* 175 (1964), pp. 26–42; R.S. Hanson, 'Paleography, The Script of the Leviticus Scroll', in D.N. Freedman and K.A. Matthews (eds.), *The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll* (11QpaleoLev) (Winona Lake: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1985). Cf. M.D. McLean, *The Use and Development of Palaeo-Hebrew in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1982); Tov, *Scribal Practices*, pp. 246–47; Spiro, 'Samaritans, Tobiads, and Judahites', pp. 285–86 n. 22.

²¹K.A. Mathews, 'The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll from Qumran', *The Biblical Archaeologist* 50.1 (1987), pp. 45–54 (49).

²²See Tov, *Scribal Practices*, pp. 246, 261–73.

²³K.A. Mathews, 'The Background of the Paleo-Hebrew Texts at Qumran', in C.L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (eds.), *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1983), pp. 549–68; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, p. 247.

²⁴See the data presented by Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, pp. 114–21.

Ezra,²⁵ the use of this script is ascertained in Ezra 4.7 where it may signal a relative novelty.²⁶

The distribution of the palaeo-Hebrew script is uneven. The script was used in inscriptions—including graffiti on ossuaries which were unlikely to be intended for public consumption—on coins, seal impressions and jar-handles, for marginal signs in Qumran fragments, for the writing of the divine name(s) in a contrastive script (palaeo-Hebrew within a text otherwise written in the square script),²⁷ and finally for complete texts (twelve fragments of the Tora and Job, Moses' sixth book, and three non-biblical texts).²⁸ The importance attached to script selection is reinforced by the parallel evidence of Greek Bible translations, which exhibit the custom to write the Tetragrammaton in palaeo-Hebrew or, less frequently, Ashurit.²⁹ Most biblical, and certainly virtually all non-biblical texts, were written in Ashurit (with the exception of the divine name[s]). It is true that the Samaritans retained their own evolved version of the palaeo-Hebrew script and claimed higher authenticity for their Tora on this basis, while their script is repudiated in rabbinic literature. But these musings occur after the event and hardly reveal anything useful about the period in which the change occurred. All in all, the representation of the old script is

²⁵Naveh seems to reject this possibility on the basis of 'the general link between a language and its script' (Naveh, 'Hebrew Texts in Aramaic Script', p. 32) and, more generally, because a distinct Jewish form of the Aramaic script, which made its acceptance easier, only appeared after the Persian period; Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, p. 122. See further Spiro, 'Samaritans, Tobiads, and Judahites', pp. 285–89 nn. 22–24.

²⁶Cf. H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC, 16; Waco: Word, 1985).

²⁷For the occurrence in fragments attributed to the Qumran scribal practice, see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, pp. 219–20, 245–46.

²⁸Tov, *Scribal Practices*, p. 246.

²⁹See, e.g., J.P. Siegel, 'The Employment of Palaeo-Hebrew Characters for the Divine Names at Qumran in the Light of Tannaitic Sources', *HUCA* 42 (1971), pp. 159–72; D.W. Parry, 'Notes on Divine Name Avoidance in Scriptural Units of the Legal Texts of Qumran', in M. Bernstein et al. (eds.), *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies*, Cambridge 1995 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 437–49; P.W. Skehan, 'The Divine Name at Qumran, in the Masada Scroll, and in the Septuagint', *BIOSCS* 13 (1980), pp. 14–44; G. Mercati, 'Sulla scrittura del tetragramma nelle antiche versioni greche del Vecchio Testamento', *Biblica* 22 (1941), pp. 339–54, 365–66 (340–42); G. Howard, 'The Tetragram and the New Testament', *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 63–83. See further H. Stegemann, *KΥΠΙΟΣ Ο ΘΕΟΣ und KΥΠΙΟΣ ΙΗΣΟΥΣ: Aufkommen und Ausbreitung des religiösen Gebrauchs von KΥΠΙΟΣ und seine Verwendung im Neuen Testament* (Habilitationsschrift Bonn 1969; I had no access to this title).

underwhelming with the exception of Jewish coins, where the old script reigned supreme up to the Bar Kokhba revolt. There is sufficient reason to assume that both scripts were used simultaneously without any problem for most of the Second Temple period. The issue of script attracted no controversy that we know of before the Tannaitic period, and even then there are accounts that speak rather neutrally about the origins of the scripts. Moreover, these scripts were mutually exchangeable since they reflect the same (Phoenician) alphabet; if there is nothing in our sources before the Mishna to suggest it actually was radical or controversial, we may have to reconsider its coexistence as a neutral phenomenon instead of viewing it in the light of a later and secondary controversy.

The practice of writing the divine name(s) in palaeo-Hebrew script in Hebrew and Greek manuscripts is instructive.³⁰ There can be little doubt that the use of a contrastive script signals sanctity of these name(s). In his analysis of this practice, Siegel pointed to γ. Meg. 1.9, 71d which records a discussion about the divine names which may not be erased in written documents.³¹ It singles out the divine names, discusses the issue of erasing their prefixes (which is allowed) and suffixes (which is forbidden), and signals that there was a disagreement about the status of the epithet צבאות, which some considered to be sacred, whereas others did not. All of this more or less tallies with established phenomena in the Qumran manuscripts: (1) non-erasure of divine names is clearly attested; (2) at least one manuscript has the divine names including pre- and suffixes in palaeo-Hebrew (4QIsa^c [4Q57]) while another excludes the prefixes (11QP^s^a [11Q5]); (3) one ms has the word צבאות in palaeo-Hebrew.

Contrary to previous claims, however, the exact function of the contrastive script has not been established beyond doubt. The rabbinic prohibition against erasure of the divine names does not mention, nor endorse,

³⁰ See, e.g., R. Marcus, 'Divine Names and Attributes in Hellenistic Jewish Literature', *PAAJR* 3 (1931-1932), pp. 43-120; Mercati, 'Sulla scrittura'; N. Fernández Marcos, 'αἰε, εἰσερεε, αἰα γ otros nombres de Dios entre los hebreos', *Sefarad* 35 (1975), pp. 91-106; Howard, 'The Tetragram'; N.A. Dahl and A.F. Segal, 'Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God', *JSJ* 9 (1978), pp. 1-28; Skehan, 'The Divine Name'; A. Pietersma, 'Kyrios or Tetragram: A Renewed Quest for the Original LXX', in A. Pietersma and C. Cox (eds.), *De Septuaginta. Studies in Honour of John William Wevers on his sixty-fifth birthday* (Mississauga: Benben Publications, 1984), pp. 85-101; Mathews, 'Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll'; Parry, 'Notes on Divine Name'; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, pp. 238-46.

³¹ Siegel, 'The Employment', p. 166. For γ. Meg. 1.9, 71d read 1.11(8), 71d.

the practice of writing these names in palaeo-Hebrew script.³² Nor has the rabbinic prescription been reflected exactly in the graphical contrast of the Qumran manuscripts: while the rabbis allow the erasure of prefixes but prohibit that of suffixes, most MSS do not change the script for either pre- or suffixes, while one does for both. Above all it is not obvious that the contrastive script served as a graphic warning against erasure, as claimed by Siegel, since the rabbis, who rejected the old script, still maintained that the divine names may not be erased. That the Tetragrammaton written in palaeo-Hebrew was not erased in fragments which otherwise do show examples of erasure, does not prove that the script was a factor in the avoidance of erasure: after all, the Tetragrammaton was not erased in square script either.

While the alleged function of the contrastive script to prevent prohibited erasures is far-fetched in view of scribal expertise and the frequency of occurrences, the marked script would be immensely helpful to remind any user of the avoidance to pronounce the divine names. It is true that the contrastive script could also have served as a graphical reminder not to destroy the manuscript in question: any manuscript containing the divine names was to be stored away. But as scrolls would be wrapped up and the contrastive script would accordingly be shielded from view, this function is far less obvious than a contrast designed to alert the reader rather than the scribe.³³

All this still raises the question whether the old script, which was considered to denote sanctity, was also itself seen as more sacred—as some scholars seem to imply, if only by assuming that a connection with the MSS written entirely in palaeo-Hebrew is, in principle, to be expected. If that were the case, it becomes incomprehensible why not all of the Tora was written in palaeo-Hebrew. Rather than assuming that the script itself denotes sanctity, the variation of script would seem to be one of several ways to mark sanctity. Alternative systems to mark sanctity are the use of a dicolon preceding the Tetragrammaton in square script, four dots representing the Tetragrammaton (Tetrapuncta), the use of a square scripted Tetragrammaton in Greek manuscripts (such as MS P. Fouad 266b), or the four Greek letters πωπυ vaguely resembling the Tetragrammaton in some

³²Tov, *Scribal Practices*, p. 245.

³³The problem with the first alternative is the lack of confirmation about the avoidance of pronunciation of the epithet צבאות.

Hexaplaric manuscripts.³⁴ Accordingly, the selective use of the old script does not indicate a preference for that script or the higher sanctity of that particular script, but it does prove that both scripts were apparently still deemed acceptable.

Rabbinic literature repeatedly attributes the change of script to the days of Ezra the Scribe, sometimes to Ezra in person. This attribution may preserve a kernel of truth, insofar as it coincides with what some scholars deem to be the most likely historical scenario, but most scholars assume that these traditions are primarily a convenient, authoritative peg for a change that had occurred in times immemorial without an accurate memory of the event.³⁵ The traditions do not agree in all details. Some of them attribute the change of script to Ezra in person, whilst others ascribe it to his period. The most frequently quoted tradition is that of b. San. 21b, which contrasts the rabbinic rejection of palaeo-Hebrew with the Samaritan use of this script. Unfortunately, this passage is far from a felicitous choice to review rabbinic thought on the subject matter for the reason that this passage has two attested rabbinic antecedents. According to b. San. 21b Ezra does not merely change the script but also the language of the Tora, from Hebrew to Aramaic, a notion reminiscent of earlier references to Ezra's introduction of Aramaic, which are likely to have been construed as references to the Aramaic portions of Ezra and Daniel alone.³⁶ The reference to the Samaritans is a relatively late add-on to the Greek loanword *הדייטות*. Both elements are absent from the parallel in the Yerushalmi quoted as the motto above. If any historical information is to be gleaned from b. San. 21b–22a, the passage must be studied in the context of its parallels to appreciate its own position as a reflection on the use of scripts and languages by Babylonian Jews.

It is common to contrast b. San. 21b's 'lay' language used by the *הדייטות*, or *לשון הדייט*, with *לשון הקודש* and to understand the lay tongue

³⁴B.M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Palaeography* (Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 33–35; K. Treu, 'Die Bedeutung des Griechischen für die Juden im römischen Reich', *Kairos NF* 15 (1973), pp. 123–44; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, pp. 218–21.

³⁵D. Diringer, 'Early Hebrew Script versus Square Hebrew Script', in D. Winton Thomas (ed.), *Essays and Studies Presented to Stanley Arthur Cook in Celebration of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1950), pp. 35–49 (36–37).

³⁶The prooftexts are Ezra 4.7 and Dan. 5.8; see t. San. 4.7; y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b. The later understanding in b. San. 21b appears to have influenced modern readings of the aforementioned texts.

as Aramaic,³⁷ which holds good in some instances,³⁸ but not in all, because לשון הדייט may also refer to Greek. The classic reference to Hillel the Elder who interpreted (דרש) a marriage contract written in Alexandria in the 'common tongue' is by common consent interpreted as the unusual, though not unheard of, application of rabbinic hermeneutics to a non-rabbinic document rather than to the Tora.³⁹ The question is, however, whether the story assumes Alexandrian Jews to have written their marriage contracts in Aramaic by the time of Hillel the Elder, or in Greek; the latter is the far more plausible option. That the wording is quoted in Hebrew, does not prove the opposite. Obviously, the emphasis remains on the lay character of the document. In still other instances, it seems to refer to a register rather than language.⁴⁰

So what do the traditions convey about the origin of Ashurit? Each time the change of script is attributed to Ezra in person, this conclusion is inferred from Ezra 4.7, whereas each time it is attributed to Ezra's days in general no proof-text is supplied. The attribution to Ezra is the consequence of reading history from the perspective of scriptural interpretation. Even when Ezra himself is deemed responsible for the change, the name Ashurit is explained on the basis of its purported origin, Assyria. The resulting impression that the personal authorization by Ezra the Scribe is a later element in the tradition is reinforced by an unrelated Tannaitic tradition quoted in b. Zev. 62a, claiming that three prophets—Haggai, Zechariah and Maleachi 'who went up with them from the Exile'—testified that the square script be used for the Tora as a change of script. It would seem to be a safe assumption that the rabbinic traditions generally attributed the change of script to the immediate post-exilic period, while the use of a proof-text and the attribution to Ezra represent a later development.

Second, the rabbinic traditions do not agree on the origin of Ashurit. They can be divided into three main positions: (1) after the Exile the script changed from palaeo-Hebrew to square; (2) the script changed from square to palaeo-Hebrew, but was restored to its original form after the Exile;

³⁷G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch* (repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960), pp. 3–4.

³⁸See b. Ber. 40b.

³⁹See t. Ket. 4.9; y. Ket. 4.8, 28d; y. Yev. 15.3, 14d. For the traditional interpretation of לשון הדייט, see Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, VI, p. 245. For a later Aramaic marriage contract from Egypt, see p. 103 n. 6 above.

⁴⁰So y. San. 7.12, 25d.

(3) the script had always been square and never changed. Each of these positions occurs in our three main sources, t. San. 4.7-8, y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b-c and b. San. 21b-22a.⁴¹ Key in the different appreciations of the alphabet change is Deut. 17.18. In the Tosefta, two different interpretations of this text are provided. After noting Ezra's suitability for receiving the Tora, as evidenced by several prooftexts, t. San. 4.7 claims that Ezra introduced the Aramaic script and language. This novelty might have applied to Ezra and Daniel rather than to the Tora were it not for the following:

ואומ' וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת וג' תורה עתידה להשתנות ולמה נקרא שמה
אשורי על שום שעלה עמהן מאשור

And it says, 'And he shall write a copy of this law' (Deut. 17.18), A Tora which is destined to be changed. And why was it called Ashurit? Because it came up with them from Assyria.

Crucial is the reading of *משנה התורה הזאת* as a *change* rather than a *duplicate* of the Tora, a change which was taken as an indication that the Tora had been written in palaeo-Hebrew until the generations of Ezra and Nehemiah introduced the square script, which derived its name from their exilic provenance in Assyria. However, in the continuation of this passage the Tosefta has Rabbi challenge the view by assuming a twofold change in script, from Ashurit to palaeo-Hebrew when Israel sinned and back to Ashurit in the days of Ezra when Israel attained merit. This challenge is finally followed by the even stronger claim that the script really never changed (t. San. 4.8):

ר' שמע' בן אלע' אומ' משום ר' אלעזר בן פרטא שאמ' משום ר' אלע' המודעי בכתב
זה ניתנה תורה לישראל שנ' ווי העמודים ווין שהן דומין לעמודים ואומ' ואל היהודים
ככתבם וכלשונם מה לשונם לא נשתנה אף כתבם לא נשתנה ולמה נקרא שמו אשור על
שום שמאושרין בכתבן אם כן למה נאמר וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת מלמד ששתי
תורות כותב לו אחת שנכנס ויוצאת עמו ואחת שמונחת לו בתוך הבית זו שנכנסת
ויוצאת עמו לא תיכנס עמו לא לבית המרחץ ולא לבית המים שנ' והיתה עמו וקרא בו
כל ימי חייו במקום הראוי לקרות

R. Simeon b. Eleazar says in the name of R. Eleazar b. Parta who said [it] in the name of R. Eleazar of Modin, In this script the Tora was given to Israel, as it is said, "The hooks of the pillars" (Exod. 27.10)—[this refers to the] waws that are written like pillars.

And it says, 'and to the Jews in their script and language' (Est. 8.9), just as their language has not changed, so their script has not changed.

⁴¹ See further Sifre Deut. 160; y. Sot. 7.2, 21c; b. Zev. 62a.

But why is it then called Ashurit? Because they are square in their script. If so, why is it said, 'And he shall write for himself a copy of this Tora' (Deut. 17.18)? This teaches that he writes for himself two Torot, one which comes in with him and goes out with him, and one which he leaves home. This one which goes out and comes in with him should not go in with him to the bathhouse or to the urinal, as it is said, 'and it shall be with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life', that is to say, in a place which is appropriate for reading.

Each element of the first tradition has been converted to a testimony of Ashurit's authenticity: the identity of the original script, its name and provenance, and finally the alleged change on the basis of Deut. 17.18. That the identity of the script in which the Tora had been given at Mt Sinai had always been Ashurit follows from two prooftexts, the form of the waws in combination with Exod. 27.10, and the reference to Jewish script in Est. 8.9, which was taken as evidence for a fixed language and script.⁴² As a consequence the name Ashurit could no longer refer to its exilic provenance, but it now gains an alternative explanation that is based on its characteristic square shape. That only leaves the prooftext for the change of script, which is most naturally neutralized by its interpretation as a reference to a second, rather than a changed, copy of the Tora for the King.

How to account for these diverging traditions? In the quotation at the beginning of this chapter (y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b) the selection of the Aramaic script and Hebrew language is described in neutral terms, without reference to either the *הדיטות*, which probably is a secondary development, or the Samaritans, which is even later. These pejorative additions are more in the spirit of an alternative tradition, ascribed to Rabbi Yehuda the Prince,⁴³ who stated that the Tora was originally given in Ashurit script to Israel, but when Israel sinned, the script was changed into palaeo-Hebrew (דעץ, 'twisted',⁴⁴ by whom remains unclear); however, 'when they attained merit

⁴² See also Est. 8.9 in y. Meg. 2.1, 73a and b. Meg. 8b–9a (discussed below).

⁴³ t. San. 4.7; y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b–c; b. San. 22a.

⁴⁴ The spelling varies between דעץ, רעץ, דחץ or רועץ in our sources; in Scalz y. Meg. 1.8(11), 71b–c the first two spellings occur, while the *editio princeps* of the Tosefta reads לשון in t. San. 4.7 but Erfurt reads לרועץ לרועץ of which the scribe cancelled his first word; Vienna reads לדחץ (not לרחץ as in Zuckerman's edn). The exact meaning of the lexeme is unclear, although the word evidently refers to palaeo-Hebrew; the rabbinic preference for Ashurit may imply that the term is pejorative.

in the days of Ezra, Ashurit returned to them'. In the latter version the script converted from Ashurit to palaeo-Hebrew, but in addition the language shifted from Hebrew to Aramaic—with the peculiar implication that the palaeo-Hebrew script had been used for an Aramaic version of the Tora. Conversely, other traditions relate a single change of script from palaeo-Hebrew to Ashurit without a change of language, and convey the notion that Ashurit was selected without reference to the double notion that Ashurit was the Tora's original script, which had been turned into a 'dashed' script (palaeo-Hebrew) upon Israel's (persistent) sinning.⁴⁵

The latter version of a single unmarked change has much to recommend it. The denial of any change goes against both the historical record and the rabbinic acknowledgement of both scripts, though it is conceivable that in later centuries manuscript evidence no longer circulated to prove the coexistence of the script for biblical scrolls. Even so, this last position would appear to nullify previous acknowledgements of change, as it seems more than likely that the rabbis (at least in Palestine) were still aware of the origins of the script. They were aware of other formal characteristics, such as the shape of the letters (y. Meg. I.II[8], 71b–c):

אמ' ר' לוי מאן דאמ' בדעץ ניתנה התורה עי'ן מעשה ניסים מאן דאמ' אשורי ניתנה התורה סמ'ך מעשה ניסים ר' ירמיה בשם ר' חייה בר בא ור' סימון תריהון אמרין תורת הראשונים לא היה לא ה'א שלהם ולא מ'ם שלהן סתום הא סמ'ך סתום
Said R. Levi, According to one who says it was given in palaeo-Hebrew, [the letter] *ayin* is a work of wonders; according to one who says that the Tora was given in Ashurit, [the letter] *samekh* was a work of wonders.
Yirmeya in the name of R. Ḥiyya b. Ba and R. Simon both say, In the Tora of the first ones neither [the letter] *he* nor [the letter] *mem* was closed, only the *Samekh* was closed.

R. Levi correctly identifies the two similar shapes which are closed forms without hooks between the two Hebrew scripts: *samekh* and *ayin*. These letters triggered a miracle when the Tora was written on stone: as the letters burned through the stone,⁴⁶ the inner part of either the *samekh* (in the square script) or the *ayin* (in the old script) stood as a miracle. Inevitably and typically, there is an element of stylizing here, since in the palaeo-Hebrew script far more letters would have resulted in a miracle, but these two forms

⁴⁵y. Meg. I.II(8), 71b–c; y. Sot. 7.I, 21b; b. San. 21b.

⁴⁶See, in addition to y. Meg. I.II(8), 71b–c, b. Meg. 3a; b. Shab. 104a.

are the most obvious ones to compare, particularly from the viewpoint of a reader used to Ashurit.

But why is the final *mem* not mentioned? This question is implicitly answered by Yirmeya and R. Simon with essentially correct palaeographical information about the form of the letters *he* and *mem*. The distinction between medial and final forms of the *manzapek* (the letters *mem*, *nun*, *šade*, *pe* and *kaph*) first appears in Aramaic and early Jewish script towards the end of the Persian period. But in the Dead Sea scrolls they still occur inconsistently within a single manuscript, or not at all. The first century CE Severus scroll may be another example of a manuscript without final forms.⁴⁷ The *he*, meanwhile, was often written as a closed letter akin to the *het*, from which it was distinguished only by an overhanging horizontal stroke (which stopped short in the *het*) but not by the disconnection of the left vertical bar.

The early rabbis seem to have been fully aware of the palaeographical particularities of the square script, as is only natural. But this knowledge was either lost or compromised by dogmatic concerns in the Amoraic period. The Talmudic discussion of the final and medial letter forms came to suggest that the medial rather than the final forms were added to the script,⁴⁸ something which extant manuscript evidence in the Tannaitic period would make virtually impossible to hypothesize. Likewise, in later traditions the ornamental crown of the letters *שעטנ"ג*—which, unlike the medieval form of this crown, would appear to have consisted of a little angular form on the top of the left vertical downstroke⁴⁹—was also recognized; here, tradition would eventually relate these *tagin* to Moses at Mt Sinai, but not in early sources, and later sources would, moreover, no longer understand the exact object of reference of the *כתר*.

And so we understand the change in the claims of the original script in which the Tora had been handed down to Moses. Distanced in time and place from epigraphic and manuscript evidence, and spurred on to highlight the claims of the square script by dogmatic concerns, the at once realistic and polemic notion that the square script had been selected lost out to two alternative traditions which claimed that Ashurit had been the

⁴⁷ See Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, pp. 170–72; Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script*, pp. 164–72; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 120, 210.

⁴⁸ See p. 483 below.

⁴⁹ Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script*, p. 210; cf. Birnbaum, *Hebrew Scripts*, p. 175.

one and only script all along. Even the notion of palaeographic change was further compromised by the assertion that Ezra even changed the very language of Tora. All these later ideas are as implausible as they are political.

7.2 The requirement of Ashurit

It is not uncommon to ascribe a preference for the old script to the Sadducees or priestly circles (frequently used as synonyms in older literature), with the almost inevitable corollary of a preference for the square script among the Pharisees or the rabbis (likewise used synonymously).⁵⁰ It has also been suggested that the rabbis acted on the association of the palaeo-Hebrew script with the Samaritans, but this observation comes in addition to, not instead of, the alleged Sadducean connection with palaeo-Hebrew.⁵¹ The main sources for this connection are m. Yad. 4.5 and b. San. 21b. According to the former, a book is not deemed sacred unless written in the square script, whilst the palaeo-Hebrew script is explicitly excluded. In the latter source, as noted above, the palaeo-Hebrew script is identified as the script used by the Samaritans. But this common interpretation is problematic on several counts: (1) there is no connection between Sadducees, or priests, and the palaeo-Hebrew script in any rabbinic source; (2) the rabbinic insistence on the square script should not automatically be retrojected into the second and first centuries BCE and/or be attributed to the Pharisees; (3) the identification with the Samaritans is a later tradition which attached itself to one which refers to the *הדיוטות*; and finally, (4) the rabbinic attribution of the change of script to Ezra has not been analysed thoroughly.

The latter two issues, which have been dealt with in the previous section, already cast a doubt on the assumptions about rabbis, Pharisees and Sadducees. It is thus useful to survey the rabbinic accounts of the pref-

⁵⁰ S. Zeitlin, 'An Historical Study of the Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures', *PAAJR* 3 (1932), pp. 135–41; Diringer, 'Early Hebrew Script'; Siegel, 'The Employment', p. 171.

⁵¹ Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, p. 122; M. Bar-Ilan, 'Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism, Part Two: Scribes and Books in the Late Second Commonwealth and Rabbinic Period', in M.J. Mulder and H. Sysling (eds.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (CRINT, 2/1; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), pp. 21–38 (29); Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script*, p. 44; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, pp. 247 and 248.

erence for the square script. The main source for the alleged Sadducean preference for palaeo-Hebrew is m. Yad. 4.5-6:

5 תרגום שבעזרא ושבעדניאל מטמא את הידים תרגום שכתבו ועברית שכתבו תרגום וכתב עברי אינו מטמא את הידים לעולם אינו מטמא עד שיכתבינו אשורית על העור ובדיו 6 אומרין צדוקין קובלין אנו עליכן פרושין שאתם אומרין כתבי הקודש מטמאין את הידים וסיפרי מירון אין מטמאין את הידים אמ' רבן יוחנן בן זכאי וכי אין לנו על הפרושין אלא זו בלבד הרי הן אומ' עצמות חמור טהורין ועצמות יוחנן כהן גדול טמאין אמרו לו לפי חיבתן היא טומאתן שלא יעשה אדם עצמות אביו ואמו תורוודות אמ' להן אף כתבי הקודש לפי חיבתן היא טומאתן וסיפרי מירון שאינן (ח)ביבין אינן מיטמאין את הידים

4.5 Targum in Ezra and Daniel impart uncleanness to hands. Targum which is written in Hebrew, or Hebrew which is written in targum, or written in [palaeo-]Hebrew, do not impart uncleanness to hands. In fact, they only impart uncleanness to hands if they are written in Ashurit [= Hebrew in square script], on leather, and with ink.

4.6 Say Sadducees, We denounce you, Pharisees! For you state, Holy Scriptures impart uncleanness to hands, but the books of Homer do not impart uncleanness to hands.

Said Rabban Yoḥanan b. Zakkay, Do we⁵² hold this matter alone against the Pharisees? Here is [another accusation]: they state, The bones of an ass are clean, but the bones of Yoḥanan, High Priest, are unclean.

They [=Sadducees] said to him, According to their value is their uncleanness, so that a person should not make spoons of the bones of his father and mother.

He said to them, So too the Holy Scriptures: According to their value is their uncleanness. But the books of Homer, which are not valued, do not impart uncleanness to hands.

In the first mishna no manuscript 'defiles the hands unless it is written in Ashurit', while the second mishna relates a Sadducean objection to the Pharisaic belief that sacred Scriptures defile the hands. There is no intrinsic reason to assume that the first mishna, too, is directed against the Sadducees, as the latter clearly is, nor that the Sadducees favoured the palaeo-Hebrew script, interestingly labelled 'Hebrew' in 4.5; rather, the Sadducees are said to reject the notion of the Tora as a source of defilement (4.6). What connects the two mishnayyot is the phrase 'defiling the hands', the editorial link, which denotes such scrolls as sacred. Zeitlin argued that

⁵²For the use of the pluralis sociativus, see D. Daube, 'Three Notes Having to Do with Johanan ben Zaccai', JTS II (1960), pp. 53-62 (53-56).

the decree that certain books defile the hands was directed against the Sadducees, but the later rabbinic explanations of the phrase have long been recognized as rationalizations; the rabbis themselves appear to have no longer understood the roots of this type of impurity.⁵³ The date of 4.5 is not clear, and while 4.6 appears to reflect an old, albeit revised tradition on controversies between the Pharisees and the Sadducees,⁵⁴ this circumstance does not automatically confer the same status upon the preceding *mishna* with its insistence upon writing in Ashurit.

The first *mishna* unequivocally denies any translation the status of sacred Scripture, whatever their script or language, which includes the translations in Greek explicitly permitted elsewhere. However, the drift of the *mishna* changed with a shift in the meaning of the noun תרגום from a 'translation, interpretation' into any language to the Aramaic Bible translation⁵⁵—and by extension, perhaps anything written in Aramaic could be denoted as *targum*. This change in meaning crops up in the early reception of m. Meg. 2.1 and m. Shab. 16.1.⁵⁶ The *Mishna* (m. Meg. 2.1) still refers to translations in any language (תרגום בכל לשון, 'if he reads [the scroll] by heart, if he reads it in a translation into any language, he does not fulfil his obligation [to read the scroll of Esther]'). And so does m. Shab. 16.1, אף תרגום, 'Even if they are written in any language, they require withdrawal' (supported by y. Shab. 16.1, 15b). But in their parallel to the latter text, the extant manuscripts of the *Tosefta* read תרגום ו, creating לשון ובכל לשון תרגום, so as to distinguish between *targum* and other translations: '... in *targum* and in any language...'⁵⁷ although the *editio princeps* does not support the copulative. More complex is the evidence in the *Bavli*. The relevant expression occurs three times in b. Shab. 115a, two of

⁵³Friedman, 'The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands', p. 118.

⁵⁴See Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, pp. 55–56. In fact, the parallel in t. Yad. 2.19, not discussed by Jaffee, would seem to reinforce his suggestion that [3] and [7] are interjections, but also that [2] was always meant to be ironic (see Daube, 'Three Notes', pp. 53–56).

⁵⁵So already I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (2nd edn, Frankfurt am Main: J. Kaufmann Verlag, 1924), p. 187. For תרגום as a Greek translation, see y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c; Gen. R. 36.8. Note also the expression תירגם עקילס 'Aquila translated' (into Greek), in y. Meg. 2.4, 73b; y. Shab. 6.4, 8b; y. Suk. 3.5, 53d; Gen. R. 21.1, 46.3, 93.3, Lev. R. 11.9, 30.8, 33.1, 33.6 (twice); TanB. וישלח 30; Cant. R. 1.3.3; 4.11.2; 4.12.2; Qoh. R. 1.11.30; Est. R. 2.7 and elsewhere.

⁵⁶t. Shab. 13.2 and b. Shab. 115b, and, with some ambiguity, in y. Meg. 2.1, 73a.

⁵⁷t. Shab. 13.2 (edn Lieberman, p. 57); Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, I, pp. 204–206.

which follow the Mishna, namely תרגום בכל לשון and תרגום, while תרגום בכל לשון (and its variants in the Vilna edn) agrees with the manuscript reading of the Tosefta.⁵⁸ Rashi, according to the Vilna edn, twice reads בכל לשון, while R. Ḥananel cites תרגום ובכל לשון.⁵⁹ In two Ashkenazi Mss of b. Meg. 17a, קראה is added in their version of the mishna, resulting in קראה תרגום קראה בכל לשון.⁶⁰ The reading תרגום בכל לשון already suggests that some understood targum to be a generic noun denoting translation, whatever the language of choice, but those readings agreeing with the Tosefta support the new meaning of 'Aramaic translation' for the word 'targum'.⁶¹

When did this development occur? Arguably, not at the time of the Mishna's redaction when Greek Bible translations were still very much in vogue. The noun targum must have preserved its original, all-inclusive meaning for quite some time. As observed in Chapter Four, whilst in the Yerushalmi the term targum still presumes a language shift above all else, it primarily denotes a cultural or hermeneutic shift in the Bavli. In keeping with this distinction, the noun may denote a translation into any language in the Yerushalmi, whereas it seems to coincide, by and large, with Aramaic translations in the Bavli. Thus the conditions for the shift in meaning appear to have existed in Amoraic Babylonia. The trigger of all this may well have been the very wording of m. Yad. 4.5, which refers to the Aramaic passages in Ezra and Daniel as targum, notably in circles where Greek translations were of little use and any targum effectively was Aramaic. But targum as 'Aramaic' was not the original meaning in the Mishna; indeed,

⁵⁸תרגום בכל לשון: Mun95 3x, TS F2(2)3 1x (2°), Ox23 2x (1°, 2°), Son1489 1x (3°; בכל לשון); TS F2(2)3 2x (1°, 3°), Vat108 2x (2°, 3°), Son1489 2x (1°, 2°); תרגום ובכל לשון: Vat487 3x, Vat108 1x (1°), Ox23 1x (3°), Vilna 1x (3°); תרגום או בכל לשון: Vilna 1x (1°); תרגום וכל לשון: Vilna 1x (2°). See also Rabbincicz, ספר דקדוקי סופרים, VII, p. 257.

⁵⁹Rashi's third reading is inconclusive. Rabbenu Ḥananel goes on to paraphrase שמתורגמן בלשון אחר and (at 115b) תרגום בכל לשון but at this point he is not citing verbatim, and the distinction between targum and any language is not of interest to him, so little can be made of these readings.

⁶⁰Mss Gött and Vat134 read תרגום בכל לשון (supported by Kaufman A50 and Parm3173 for the Mishna), but Mun95 and Lon400 read קראה תרגום קראה בכל לשון.

⁶¹Against G. Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), pp. 226–29 (= EJ 16, cols. 1203–1206), who argued that this usage is a medieval practice, A. Rapoport-Albert and T. Kwasman, 'Late Aramaic: The Literary and Linguistic Context of the Zohar', *ArSt* 4 (2006), pp. 5–19 (15) pointed out that תרגום has this meaning in the Mishna and Bavli already. More precisely, this particular meaning was read into the Mishna at an early stage.

the Yerushalmi relates m. Yad. 4.5 to a translation.⁶² Likewise, in the parallel *baraita* of b. Meg. 8b the reference to Ezra and Daniel is missing and the context is clearly about translations (to be discussed in full in the following sections). The meaning 'translation' is not problematic in any of these passages. The Aramaic portions in Daniel and Ezra were considered a *targum*, that is a translation from a presumed Hebrew original, because they seemed to present themselves as such in Ezra 4.7, וכתב הנשתון כתוב, 'and the document was written in Aramaic script and translated [into] Aramaic'.⁶³ The Tosefta understands this verse as a reference to a translation into Aramaic.⁶⁴ All the *mishna* says is that the Aramaic portions in Daniel and Ezra which were deemed to be translations defile the hands, but not if they are retroverted into Hebrew, just as the rest of the Scriptures do not defile the hands when set in translation. Moreover, it lays down the rule of the square script as indispensable to the Holy Writ. While the Aramaic portions of Daniel and Ezra were presumably always written in the square script, the Tora must still have been known in its palaeo-Hebrew variety at the time when this *mishna* originated.

This *mishna* raises the question how the insistence upon the square script can be reconciled with the explicit permission to use written scriptural translations that not only included but were at times even limited to Greek versions, as found in m. Meg. 1.8, and more qualified already, 2.1. The cunning resolution to have Greek versions for liturgical use scripted in Ashurit is unlikely to have been anticipated by the editors of m. Yad. 4.5, and most likely reflects later usage, although not necessarily many centuries later, since this way out of the conundrum was already envisaged by Rava in b. Meg. 9a.⁶⁵ These three *mishnayyot*—m. Meg. 1.8, 2.1 and Yad. 4.5—are pivotal in the rabbinic reception history of Bible translations, which went from initial leniency to ever greater restrictiveness. In the long run,

⁶² See y. Shab. 16.1, 15b. The quote עברי שכתבו תרגום 'Hebrew written in *targum*' represents a translation on a par with כל לשון טעונים גנייה 'even though they are written in any language, they require storage'.

⁶³ For the meaning of the biblical text, see Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*.

⁶⁴ See t. San. 4.7: מנה תרגומי ארמית אף כתב ארמית. See also b. San. 22a. Thus I read the *mishna* as follows: 'The translation that is an authentic part of Ezra and Daniel defiles the hands. A translation which is converted into Hebrew, or a Hebrew original which is translated, or written in palaeo-Hebrew script, do not defile the hands. In fact, they only defile the hands if they are written in square script, on leather, and with ink.'

⁶⁵ See below, p. 310.

the strictly oral-performative interpretation of Scripture prevailed over the use of written Bible translations, although we should presumably allow for non-recorded exceptions to the rule in addition to those already recorded in rabbinic literature. Yet the contrast between oral and written is not what it was often thought to be. The oral-performative translation was far from spontaneous, but, at least according to the rabbinic ideal, highly controlled and regulated. In its culmination, the targum's very wording was governed by Masoretic tradition, which safeguarded certain translation equivalents and, especially, the exceptional cases where non-standard translations had to be adopted. The rabbinically approved translation is an oral performance based on rote learning of a composition which was, in Babylonia, to a very large extent fixed, and which must have been committed down to writing at least initially, even if its subsequent transmission may have been oral for the most part.

Thus, in addition to the distinction between script and language, the contrastive correlation of these three *mishnayyot* yields the dichotomy of writing and translating Scripture. The dichotomy is twofold: writing the Hebrew source text versus oral interpretation, as well as writing scriptural translations or not. Naturally, scriptural translations were written, but the reception history of these *mishnayyot* breaks the link between writing and translating, just as it breaks the link between script and language. It is not an easy and smooth process, and the irregularities and inconsistencies reveal the nerve centre of rabbinic thinking about the practice of translation. Accordingly, the distinction between script and language is an informative window on the use for languages and translations as envisaged by the rabbis.

7.3 Squaring up to the Mishna

In the rabbinic reception of the *mishna*, the distinction between script and language is closely related to the dichotomy of written and oral Bible translations. There is little doubt that this latter distinction boasts wide support in rabbinic literature. The sages perceived of *targum* as Oral Tora, and thereby distinguished Bible translation from the written original text as an oral running commentary on the Tora itself,⁶⁶ in contrast to the

⁶⁶See Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views'.

Jewish-Hellenistic understanding of translation as a written substitute for the original. However, post-modern sensitivities would urge us not to take such clean dichotomies at face value, but to ask what they actively suppress and substitute. If we can make visible what consensual theory has rendered invisible we attain a keener grasp of the varieties at work in the rabbinic understanding of translation in Late Antiquity. In the following sections I will focus on the reception of three *mishnayyot* and argue that the diversity and discordances in the rabbinic reflection on the practice of translation are symptomatic of a lingering problem in rabbinic thought. Whereas early rabbis sometimes allowed translations to stand in for the original and thereby acquire the status of Holy Writ as a result of established practices, others disapproved deeply of such infringements of what they considered the absolute sovereignty of the Hebrew revelation. Since both attitudes—routinely characterized as the Hellenistic and the rabbinic understanding of Bible translation—had brought about views which left their imprint upon the collective rabbinic memory, how do we resolve the conflict inherent in the early rabbinic tradition?

The problem of interpretation begins with the translation of m. Meg. 1.8. The wider context of this *mishna* deals with the question whether one could recite Esther in translation, a question narrowed down to the rules for its writing in this *mishna*. These rules involve an ambiguity of language and script which turns out to be essential:

אין בין ספרים לתפילים ומזוזות אלא שהספרים ניכתבים בכל לשון ותפילים ומזוזות
אינן נכתבות אלא אשורית רבן שמעון בן גמליא' אומר אף בספרים לא היתירו שיכתבו
אלא יוונית

Do the terms *לשון* and *יוונית* refer to languages or scripts, or both? Neusner's translation removes any ambiguity:

A. There is no difference between sacred scrolls and phylacteries and mezuzot except that sacred scrolls may be written in any alphabet ['language'], while phylacteries and mezuzot are written only in square ['Assyrian'] letters.

B. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, 'Also: in the case of sacred scrolls: they have been permitted to be written only in Greek'.⁶⁷

For Neusner, this *mishna* refers to the scripts in which the Scriptures may be written, but not to their language(s). Accordingly, R. Shimon b.

⁶⁷J. Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 318.

Gamaliel's qualification would seem to refer to the Greek script rather than the Greek language, although Neusner's translation does not make this explicit and perhaps Neusner refrains from correlating the two halves (his A and B) of this *mishna*. Neusner's interpretation stands far from isolated; his interpretation turned out to be the eventual consensus in the late Middle Ages.⁶⁸ Earlier recipients, however, did not unanimously share this opinion: Eyn Yaaqov, for example, understands Greek in m. Meg. 1.8 as בלשון יונית. Above all, the medieval take on the *mishna* flies in the face of the meaning of בכל לשון which invariably denotes 'in any language'.⁶⁹ That a language other than Hebrew may, on occasion, imply another alphabet is evident in m. Shab. 12.3, but this implication of another alphabet still includes the meaning 'language', unlike Neusner's translation above. When an anonymous voice in b. A. Zar. 10a denies the Romans their own language and script, which has a ring of truth because they used Greek rather than Latin in the East, both aspects are not confused. How, then, could the forced and untenable medieval explanation that לשון refers to an alphabet become credible at all?

The distinction between script and language enabled this creative interpretation of בכל לשון as 'in any script', but the main reason for this take on m. Meg. 1.8 is the existence of an inherited and contradictory set of values regarding scriptural translations. The plain reading of m. Meg. 1.8 allows the Scriptures to be written in any language, but this reading became thorny when written scriptural translations no longer assumed the assent of (the majority of) rabbis who advocated an oral-performative translation—the paradigm shift discussed in Chapter Six.⁷⁰ The distinction between script and language seemed to provide an escape route, traces of which can be discerned in the sources that take up our *mishna*: y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c; b. Meg. 8b–9b; Sef. T. 1.6 and Sof. 1.7–8. All these texts are anomalous to a degree; they do not conform

⁶⁸On this consensus, see Veltri, *Eine Tora*, p. 119. See now also J.J. Price and S. Naeh, 'On the Margins of Culture: The Practice of Transcription in the Ancient World', in H.M. Cotton et al. (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 257–88.

⁶⁹m. Shab. 16.1; m. Meg. 1.8; 2.1; Sot. 7.1; t. Shab. 13.2; t. Sot. 2.1; 7.1; 7.7; b. Ber. 13a; 15a; 40b; b. Shab. 115a/b; b. Meg. 17a; and so on. In m. Shab. 12.3 בכל לשון may imply script, without excluding the meaning 'language'.

⁷⁰Note, again, that the emphasis on performance in the notion of the Oral Tora does not altogether negate a rejection of written texts, particularly of translated Scripture.

to the 'rabbinic' understanding of Bible translation, in which the oral-performative translation was on the one hand inextricably tied to the Hebrew recitation, and on the other kept apart from written translations that could be used without recourse to the original. Instead, these passages blur the distinction between written and oral modes of translation. But in their appreciation of the Greek translations they do not agree either.

The reception of *m. Meg.* 1.8 in the *Yerushalmi* offers one, only partially resolved, view of the position of translations vis à vis the Holy Writ (*y. Meg.* 1.11[8], 71c):

תני רבן שמעון בן גמליאל או' אף בספרים לא התירו שיכתבו אלא יוונית בדקו ומצאו שאין התורה יכולה להיתרגם כל צורכה אלא יוונית בורגני אחד ב(י)א להם ארמית מתוך יוונית ר' ירמיה בשם ר' חייא בר בא תירגם עקילס הגר התורה לפני ר' אליעזר ולפני ר' יהושע וקילסו אותו [ואמרו לו] יפיפית מבני אדם

It has been taught, 'Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel says, Even scrolls they did not allow to be written except in Greek' (*m. Meg.* 1.8).

They investigated and found that the Tora can be properly translated only into Greek.

A soldier⁷¹ made up for them an Aramaic [version] from the Greek.⁷²

Yirmeya in the name of R. Hīyya b. Ba [said], Aquilas the proselyte translated the Tora before R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua, and they praised him, and told him, 'You are fairer than all human beings' (*Ps.* 45:3).

Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel's opinion, a minority view in the Mishna, here represents the majority view. But rather than the Septuagint the named rabbis single out Aquila's version for praise—in stark contrast to an ad-hoc Aramaic version. What really makes this passage enthralling are its links to previous elements in the *sugya*. For one thing, Aquila's epithet of fairness, *יפיפית*, recalls the language of Yaphet, i.e. Greek, which was to be

⁷¹Or 'guard'; the meaning of the loanword *בורגני* is not entirely clear, but on the basis of its etymology it may refer to a soldier who is part of a column in the Roman army. Cf. Levy, *WTM*, I, p. 203; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 149.

⁷²*Est. R.* 4.12 reads *רומי* rather than *ארמית*, an actualisation; cf. n. 5 above. *Est. R.* 4.12 also reads *בררו* instead of *בידא*, which fits the context less well. The reference to Aramaic is supported by *Ber. Z.* 9.17. The reading *רומי* reflects the possibility that (Christian) Latin versions were based on the Greek, but historical likelihood may not be the right criterion to decide upon the original reading, since the point of this story is that translations other than the Greek ones are not reliable, and the main culprit of this view was Aramaic, not Latin. For different opinions, see Levy, *CWT*, I, p. 81. Veltri suggests that a censor changed 'Roman' into 'Aramaic', which is speculative; see *Eine Tora*, p. 171.

employed in the tents of Shem according to Bar Qappara a few lines earlier in this passage. An analysis of the structure of this unit in the Yerushalmi discloses more than the customary piecemeal reading of its embedded traditions. In synopsis, it reads as follows (following a quotation of m. Meg. 1.8):

- [A] Midrash of Gen. 11.1: the whole world spoke one language, which is tantamount to either 70 languages, or the holy tongue; Bar Qappara states that the language of Yaphet should be spoken in the tents of Shem (see pp. 26–28 above).
- [B] Midrash of Gen. 9.27 on the children of Yaphet; hence justification for the use of a scriptural translation (מיכן לתרגום; see pp. 296–97 below).
- [C] Four languages are appropriate in the world (Ashurit for writing; see pp. 271–72 above).
- [D] Ashurit was introduced/reintroduced by Ezra; discussion of particularities of the scripts (see pp. 281–85 above).
- [E] Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel allowed Greek; they investigated, and found that the Tora cannot be translated appropriately except in Greek.
- [F] Aquila is praised for his translation, ‘fairer’ than anything in the world.

At the editorial level the Yerushalmi stacks traditions which follow the theme of the *mishna* and so it punctuates the ‘language of Yaphet’ as well as the selection of Ashurit. Wide-ranging in its discussion of all languages, it is telling that the Yerushalmi never affirms, or denies, that any language may be used for Scripture, and yet it effectively sides with Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel in its preference for Greek by its topics and emphasis.

[A–D] relate to the first part of the *mishna* and [E–F] to the second part, although such divisions are rarely absolute and each half may linger in the background of the other’s discussion. The first half, with the view that the Scriptures may be written in any language, evokes a discussion of the languages of the world, the offspring of Yaphet, the proper use of four languages and the selection of Ashurit [A–D], but glosses over the permissive majority opinion of the *mishna*. The move towards Greek and Ashurit sets in without delay. Starting with the linguistic confusion surrounding the Tower of Babel, the opinion takes centre stage that Yaphet’s tongue (Greek) is specifically permitted by and eminently suitable for the Tora. This reflection is followed by a discussion of Yaphet’s offspring, which coincides with the spread of Graeco-Roman culture, concluding that the practice of translation is justified—yet to be confined to Greek alone.

Elements [A], [B] and [F] are linked by the keyword 'Yaphet', while the theme of languages is further spelled out in [C], which leads to the discussion of the origin and selection of the Jewish script in [D] (discussed above). [E] returns to Greek as a language permitted for the Tora, which is narrowed down to Aquila's version in [F]. At the editorial level the praise reserved for Aquila is neither incidental nor individual.⁷³

Unit [B] may at first sight appear as a digressive intermezzo about the locations with which the 'sons of Yaphet' in Gen. 10's Table of Nations are associated: 'Gomer is Garmemiyya, Magog is Gothiya, ...' In truth, this midrash about the children of Yaphet is crucial within its larger context, as it illustrates Yaphet's expansion, hence Hellenism, thereby coming down on the side of Greek following Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel and licensing targum by way of conclusion: ר' יודן בר שלום אמ' מיכן לתרגום 'R. Yudan bar Shalom said, Thus [we derive the legitimacy of] the translation'. The reasoning behind 'thus' is not immediately apparent. The argument appears to be based on the extent of Yaphet's domestication, perhaps in combination with the reference to Yaphet's beauty of Gen. 9.27. However, in Gen. R. 36.8 R. Yudan's conclusion follows Bar Qappara's statement about Greek in the tents of Shem, without the intermezzo about the areas of Yaphet's offspring, which is the more natural sequence. Only Gen. 9.27 provides the key for scriptural translation into Greek. What bearing has the intervening search for contemporary geographical equivalents to the Table of Nations on the argument in the Yerushalmi?

The extension of Yaphet as envisaged in Gen. 9.27 and realized in Gen. 10 offers further support for the legitimacy of scriptural translation in Greek. Identifying each of the names with areas that the Graeco-Roman world encompassed, the actual areas of the Greek-speaking world confirm the inference from Gen. 9.27 as regards the use of a Greek translation. However, the identifications are not so easily beaten into line. The first few identifications do not tally with Greek-speaking environments: גרממייה, גותייה and מדי. Whether or not גרממייה denotes Germania, as Alexander forcefully argues,⁷⁴ גותייה denotes the Transdanuvian territory of the Goths, while

⁷³ Contrast Labendz, 'Aquila's Bible Translation', p. 359.

⁷⁴ Alexander, *Toponymy*, pp. 121–22. Others have identified this name with Germanicia in Commagene, which would place it in Asia Minor and thus Greek-speaking. See M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), p. 194. For further suggestions and references, see Alexander.

Media is the area east of the Tigris.⁷⁵ Is the Yerushalmi subtly undermining the point that 'Yaphet' extended the use of Greek in these areas? Indeed, some of the places identified may well have been Aramaic-speaking: the hot springs of Callirrhoe with which biblical Lesha is identified, were located to the East of the Dead Sea, hence an Aramaic-speaking area. Chances are that these famous baths attracted the Greek-speaking elite just as they did Herod the Great, and a few more places may actually have been bilingual Greek and Aramaic, such as Ḥammat and Media. It could be argued that in making these associations, the Yerushalmi is associating the sons of Yaphet with Aramaic and hence implying—in the light of Gen. 9.27—the legitimacy of scriptural translation in Aramaic.

Yet accuracy of vernaculars is not the point of this passage, as the selection of names bears out. For the Yerushalmi does not include just the 'sons of Yaphet' but also part of the 'sons of Canaan' in its attempt at contemporization, namely 'the Arvadites', 'the Zemarites' and 'the Hamathites', identified with cities in modern-day Syria and Lebanon. Smaller towns in the same area and the same biblical genealogy of Canaan (10.15-17), and all of North-Africa (places belonging to Cush and Shem, Gen. 10.6-14, 21-31),⁷⁶ are conspicuously absent. This suggests that the selection principle is the illustration of Yaphet's expansion, hence Hellenism; whatever actual languages were spoken in many of these places, they were seen as Graeco-Roman towns and cities where Greek occupied the position of the ruling language. Against this background, it would seem most plausible that *Germania* refers, after all, to the city in Asia Minor, while the Goths in Dacia were acculturated to the Romans. And only so we understand the conclusion that a *targum* is licensed—in Greek, for obvious reasons.

The Yerushalmi offers a first glimpse of the connection that was once forged between script and translation without forcing it. The Yerushalmi extensively dwells on the origin and authenticity of Ashurit, that is, Hebrew in the square script, turns Ashurit into the preferred choice and the only remaining option next to Greek. With its twofold stress on Ashurit and Greek the Yerushalmi stops short of enforcing the condition of Ashurit to translations, which would have made the Greek version unacceptable unless transliterated into the square script. According to our sources Rabbān Shimon ben Gamaliel did not add the stipulation that the Scriptures

⁷⁵Alexander, *Toponymy*, pp. 166 and 124.

⁷⁶For identifications, see Alexander, *Toponymy*, *passim*.

should be 'written in Ashurit, on a scroll and with ink', as per m. Yad. 4.5, but the exception made for Greek does sit somewhat precariously next to the preceding preference of Ashurit, claimed to have been the Tora's original form, so that it requires—and receives—a corresponding strong confirmation of its legitimacy.

That this tension between Greek and Ashurit is real will become apparent when we have a closer look at the mishna's reception. One key element from the Yerushalmi, that the Tora can hardly be translated except in Greek, was taken up by both Sefer Tora and Soferim, but in new ways (Sef. T. 1.6):⁷⁷

- 1 אין כותבין לא עברית ולא עילמית לא מדיית ולא יונית
 - 2 שבעים זקנים כתבו כל התורה לתלמי המלך לשון יונית
 - 3 והיה אותו היום קשה לישראל כיום שעשו בו את העגל שלא היתה תורה יכולה להתרגם כל צרכה
 - 4 שלשה עשר דברים שינו בה...
- [1] One should not write [the Tora] in [palaeo-]Hebrew, nor in Elamite, Median or Greek.
 - [2] Seventy elders wrote for King Ptolemy the whole Tora in the Greek language.
 - [3] And that day was as hard for Israel as the day on which the [golden] calf was made, because the Tora cannot be translated appropriately.
 - [4] Thirteen things they changed in it ...

Among the many remarkable aspects of this tradition, one stands out: in its reference to the impossibility to translate the Tora, Sefer Tora lacks the qualification 'except in Greek' which the Yerushalmi pointedly included, even underlined by its subsequent appraisal of Aquila's Greek version. While the Yerushalmi continues the line that began with Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel's view, Sefer Tora has a markedly different appreciation of the Greek translation.

In [1] Sef. T. 1.6 lumps writing in palaeo-Hebrew, Elamite and Median together with writing in the Greek language. It follows that Sefer Tora makes no distinction between writing in another alphabet and writing in another language. It rejects alphabets such as '[palaeo-]Hebrew' and others, including Greek. However, those that follow 'Hebrew' apparently refer to languages and their alphabets, as follows from [2]: לשון יונית refers to a written translation, not a transliteration of Hebrew into

⁷⁷M. Higger, *Seven Minor Tractates* (New York: Bloch, 1930), pp. כב–כד.

Greek script. The negative account of the Greek translation for Ptolemy that follows in [3] confirms the rejection of writing in scripts and languages other than Hebrew written in square script (Ashurit). That the Vilna edition reads כתיבה for לשון, so that the seventy elders, accordingly, 'wrote the Tora for Ptolemy the king in Greek writing', makes little difference;⁷⁸ a Greek copy is still a translation, hardly a transliteration. It is no coincidence that Sefer Tora does not include the condition to write the Tora in Ashurit, as that is its default position, while it denies any positive value a translation might have.

Things are different, and far more complex, in the parallel of Sof. 1.7-8, where the insistence upon Ashurit features prominently. In striking contrast to Sefer Tora, Soferim presents two versions of the story about the Greek translation for Ptolemy (edn Higgen):⁷⁹

- 1 אין כותבין לא עברית ולא ארמית ולא מדית ולא יווני
 - 2 כתב בכל לשונות בכל כתבים לא יקרא בה עד שתהא כתובה אשורית
 - 3 מעשה בחמשה זקנים שכתבו לתלמי המלך את התורה יוונית
 - 4 והיה אותו היום קשה לישראל כיום שנעשה בו העגל שלא הייתה התורה יכולה להתרגם כל צרכה
 - 5 שוב מעשה בתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים ושנים זקנים והושיבם בשבעים ושנים בתים ולא גלה להם על מה כינסם נכנס אחר כל אחד ואחד מהם אמר להם כתבו לי תורת משה רבכם נתן המקום עצה בלב כל אחד ואחד והסכימה דעתן לדעת אחת וכתבו לו תורה בפני עצמה ושלושה עשר דבר שינו בה...
- [1] One should not write [the Tora] in [palaeo-]Hebrew, nor in Aramaic, Median or Greek.
 - [2] [If] written in any other language and any other script, one should not read from it, unless it is written in Ashurit [script/language?].
 - [3] It happened that five elders wrote for King Ptolemy the Tora in Greek.
 - [4] That day was as hard for Israel as the day on which the [golden] calf was made, because the Tora cannot be translated appropriately.
 - [5] Once again it happened that King Ptolemy gathered seventy-two elders and accommodated them in seventy-two houses, but he did not reveal to them why he had gathered them. He went into [the house of] each one of them and said to them, 'Write for me the Tora of Moses, your teacher'. God guided each of them in their heart, and their opinions agreed with

⁷⁸ So Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend*, p. 69 n. 52. In fact, any ambiguity is resolved in [3] which refers to the act of translating; contrast Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 119–20.

⁷⁹ M. Higgen, *מסכת סופרים* (New York: דבי רבן, 1937), pp. 100–103. There are two recensions of this tractate; see Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend*, pp. 71–72.

one another, so that they wrote a Tora for him on their own, but they changed thirteen things in it...

It has long been recognized that this passage is a pastiche of Palestinian and Babylonian traditions, which combines two strikingly different views of the Septuagint. The first version of the story [3–4] equates the composition of the Septuagint to the making of the Golden Calf. Thus this version was made in contravention of the *halakha*,⁸⁰ because the Tora cannot be translated—as states *Sefer Tora*.⁸¹ The second version [5] betrays a far more positive reception of the Septuagint, in which God grants wisdom to each of the translators, who, independently from one another, turn up with one and the same translation, including 13 changes.

Key to understanding this convoluted passage is the ambiguity of *Ashurit*. The first part [1–2] stipulates that the Tora should always be written in *Ashurit* which could denote the script, the Hebrew language, or both. The context of this passage is the practice of writing the Tora against the backdrop of translations in various languages which circulated in the Jewish world. If *Ashurit* [2] denotes script, it would be legitimate to write down any scriptural translation as long as the scribe employs the square script—a practice which has been attested. On the other hand, if *Ashurit* implies the Hebrew language, or both language and script, no translation can ever be lawfully committed to paper or parchment, and the subsequent, ominous event of the Tora written on behalf of King Talmi may well illustrate the stakes.

Does *Soferim* allow translations to be transliterated into the square script? If we assume that *Soferim*'s reference to *Ashurit* implies the Hebrew language, this passage would denounce any translation out of hand and be entirely consistent with the opinion voiced in *Sefer Tora*. Since *Sefer Tora* is deemed to be the older text, created in the third century CE, although subject to later revisions,⁸² this 'agreement' has something going for it. Only a reductive meaning of *Ashurit* as a script in *Sof. 1.7* would disconnect the version in *Soferim* from *Sefer Tora* since *Soferim* would, on this

⁸⁰Cf. y. *Shab.* 1.3, 3c; b. *Shab.* 17a.

⁸¹This first version in *Sof.* mentions 5 rather than 70 or 72 elders, as does *ARN B* 37. See Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend*, p. 73.

⁸²Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, pp. 228, 232. For the disputed relationship between *Sef. T.* 1.6 and *Sof. 1.7–8*, see Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen*, pp. 419–20, 441; Higger, *Seven Minor Tractates*, p. 10; Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 118–22.

interpretation, allow for translations in square script,⁸³ but this makes little sense in the context of [3–4] with its negative perception of any translation, and in particular that translation written on behalf of King Ptolemy. And yet, the following positive valuation of a miraculously wrought translation in [5] means that the outcome still hangs in the balance.

If we consider *Soferim* in its own right, a split image emerges. The protasis of [2] contains two conditions, covering script and language, while the final condition consists of a single element: '[If] written in any other language and any other script' versus 'Ashurit'. Philologically, this correlation suggests that *Ashurit* denotes more than just the square script: had the term not included the element of language it would have been superfluous to indicate 'in any other language'. If *Ashurit* indicates the sanctioned unity of the Hebrew language and the square script, then this explains how another version of m. Meg. 1.8 in Sof. 15.1 can state that תפילין ומזוזות אין נכתבין אלא בלשון אשורית 'tefillin and mezuzot may not be written but in the *Ashurit* language', with *Ashurit* qualified as a language by the plus בלשון.⁸⁴ Interestingly, this latter qualification is not attested in the Vilna edn of *Soferim*. On the one hand, the Vilna edition may preserve a text which was made to conform with the mishna; on the other, the plus בלשון may be an attempt to define *Ashurit* as a language and thereby to invalidate translations that are transliterated into the square script. It is in itself noteworthy that the textual tradition oscillates between these two possibilities.

Soferim's juxtaposition of two contradictory takes on the Greek Tora for Ptolemy raises many problems. Not only does it prompt the question which sources the editor of *Soferim* used (so Veltri),⁸⁵ but also how he

⁸³As advanced by Veltri, *Eine Tora*, p. 120.

⁸⁴The same 'plus' found in t. Meg. 2.6; see p. 192 above.

⁸⁵One detail requires attention. In Sof. 1.7 the phrase לא יקרא בה [2], followed by כתובה, refers to a feminine noun, but the text only has a masculine antecedent: כתב. Veltri argues that the feminine most likely reflects the antecedent מגלה of t. Meg. 2.6, which the editor of *Soferim* used out of context (Veltri, *Eine Tora*, p. 119). This is unlikely, because our sources frequently confuse the gender of כתב: b. San. 21b בכתב אשורית לב; b. San. 21b בכתב עברי, בכתב אשורית and כתב עברית; b. Meg. 8b אשורית בכתב; t. San. 4.7 אשורי בכתב. In Yalq. S. Jud. §247 the phrases ולמה נקרא שמה אשורית and ולמה נקרא שמו אשורית both refer to כתב. But more importantly, the text refers to the Tora as its implied antecedent (just as the feminine in t. Meg. 2.6 refers to the implied antecedent (מגלה). Indeed, the phrase לא יקרא בה also occurs in Sof. 1.10 with an implicit antecedent; see also Sof. 1.11. In any case, the editor believed that this

made sense of the present text (so Cohen).⁸⁶ At the synchronic level, the only way out of the problem is to differentiate between the two events by assuming that the assented Tora which was *changed* for King Talmai was not a translation fit for ritual use, with the result that the second, 'positive' view leaves the untranslatability of the Tora essentially unaffected.⁸⁷ The question remains whether we should thus rationalize two irreconcilable positions. At the diachronic level, two different perceptions of the Greek Tora are at issue which have not been harmonized. Viewed from this perspective, [3–5] cannot shed light on the meaning of Ashurit as it relates to another source and context. Both approaches to the text leave something to be desired. Soferim combines different, sometimes contradictory takes on several issues, and to harmonize them in a logical, consistent way or to explain its contents away as an erroneous pastiche is to stem its confused voice—a voice confused about translations.

A binary field emerges, with script and language one moment distinct, the next moment inextricable. Similarly, scriptural translations are first written off altogether then accepted in qualified form. In all this the issue of script is most revealing. After all, what purpose serves the insistence on square script when stripped of its opposition to palaeo-Hebrew if not to emphasize and insist upon the original language of the Tora? To play up the physical form of the text carries implications for its translatability; wherever on the basis of text-immanent criteria the script is deemed essential, the argument also presses for the original language of the text. The issue of script is raised in connection with the question whether a translation is acceptable or not.

Two further observations are noteworthy. First, Sefer Tora and Soferim use the verb להתרגם in connection with a written Greek version (as does, one might add, the Yerushalmi on m. Meg. 1.8). This usage of terminology contradicts the traditional distinction between a written and an oral mode of translation, but confirms our observations in the previous chapter.⁸⁸

rule applied not only to the scroll of Esther but to Tora scrolls as well—whether or not the insistence upon Ashurit is imported from the context of Purim.

⁸⁶ Cohen, 'The Task of Talmud', pp. 91–93.

⁸⁷ See Cohen. 'The Task of Talmud', p. 92; Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 151, 168.

⁸⁸ Veltri marshals this distinction to illuminate the unique rabbinic reception of the Septuagint, but he is forced to claim that Sof. and Sef. T. are confused about the distinction between script and language (*Eine Tora*, p. 121).

Second, the firm denial of any appropriate translation of the Tora in Sefer Tora is not an isolated instance in rabbinic literature. In Seder Rav Amron Gaon, Taanit 4.5, we find: תלמי המלך יונית בשמונה בטבת נכתבה התורה בימי תלמי המלך יונית, 'On the eight of Tevet, in the days of King Ptolemy, the Tora was written in Greek and darkness came to the world for three days'. This sentence is literally echoed in Megillat Taanith.⁸⁹ In some cases the underlying attitude may reflect polemic responses to the Christian appropriation of Scripture in Late Antiquity.⁹⁰ But polemics is not the sole, or even main, reason for such remarks. The translation of the Tora attributed to Onqelos in b. Meg. 3a—which reflected the Greek version of Aquila, but was understood to refer to the Targum—triggered the same comment:⁹¹ באותה שעה בא חשך לעולם שלשה ימים. This negative verdict lends itself to be applied at will to any Bible translation. And a responsum by the end of the millennium flatly denies the possibility to translate—except the targum which the Prophets inspired Onqelos and Jonathan to write.⁹² Consequently, the dissonant voices in Sefer Tora and Soferim may well be understood as the outcome of a long process, which can be traced from Tannaitic times to the editors of the Talmudim, and which would eventually lead to the creative reinterpretation of בכל לשון in m. Meg. 1.8 as the only way out of an inherited problem.

Recapitulating, when the Mishna suggests that the sages created a halakhic space for the practice of writing scriptural translations, but Rabban Shimon b. Gamaliel only permitted written Greek versions, the discussion in the Yerushalmi sided with the latter and established that the Tora⁹³

⁸⁹A. Neubauer, *Anecdota Oxoniensia: Medieval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes Edited from Printed Books and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), vol. 2, p. 24. See now Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend*, pp. 81–83; V. Noam, *הנוסחים*, pp. 81–83; V. Noam, *הנוסחים*, pp. 81–83; V. Noam, *הנוסחים*, pp. 81–83.

⁹⁰Bregman, 'Mishnah and LXX'; I. Gruenwald, *התורה ליוונית*, pp. 144–46. See pp. 228–31 and 490.

⁹¹Marginal in MS Mun140, incorporated into the main text of Ox23.

⁹²B.M. Lewin, *אוצר הגאונים*, 1–111 (Haifa: n.p., 1928–Jerusalem: Central Press, 1944), IX, pp. 130–31; J. Olszowy-Schlanger, 'Karaite Linguistics: The "Renaissance" of the Hebrew Language among Early Karaite Jews, and Contemporary Linguistic Theories', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft* 7 (1997), pp. 81–100 (86).

⁹³Although the term 'Tora' may have a wider sense than the Pentateuch here, since the Yerushalmi cites verses from both the Prophets and the Writings as translated by Aquila, it is also possible that this discussion disregards the wider sense on purpose. See below for the Babylonian reception.

could only be translated into Greek, singling out Aquila's version. Whether subsequently or simultaneously, both *Sefer Tora* and *Soferim* renege on the permission to write Greek translations in the Greek script, let alone on translations in other languages. But the most detailed scrutiny of the *mishna* is found in the Babylonian *gemara*. Only here do we find a discussion including all options for biblical scrolls: foreign languages in their own foreign script, foreign languages in square Hebrew script, Hebrew in non-square script, and Hebrew in square script. Here a development may be discerned which found its culmination in the extreme positions of *Sefer Tora* and *Soferim*.

7.4 The binary oppositions of b. Meg. 8b–9b

The Bavli deals with m. Meg. 1.8 at ff. 8b–9b.⁹⁴ The following text and translation follow ms ColX3 (a textual score can be found in the Appendix):⁹⁵

ורמיניה מקרא שכתבו תרגום ותרגום שכתבו מקרא וכתב עברית כולן אין מטמאין את הידים עד שיכתבו אשורית על הספר בדיו אמ' רבא לא קשיא כאן בגופין שלנו כאן בגופין שלהן אמ' ליה אבאיי במאי אוקימתה לההיא בגופין שלהם אי הכי מאי איריא מקרא שכתבו תרגום ותרגום שכתבו מקרא אפלו מקרא שכתבו מקרא ותרגום שכתבו תרגום נמי לא דהא תנן עד שיכתבנו כתב אשורית על הספר בדיו אלא אידי ואידי בגופין שלנו ולא קשיא הא רבנן הא רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אי ר'בן שמעון בן גמליאל עד שיכתבנו כתב אשורית והא איכא כתב יונית אלא לא קשיא כאן בספרים כאן בתפלין ומוזוות ותפלין ומוזוות מאי טעמא דכת' בהו והיו בהוייתן יהו ומאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא אלא לא קשיא כאן בספרים כאן במגלה מגלה מאי טעמא דכת' ככתבם וכלשונם ומאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא בשלמא תורה איכא יגר שהדותא תניא הכא מאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא אמ' רבא ונשמע פתגם המלך אשר יעשה רב נחמן בר יצחק אמ' וכל הנשים יתנו יקר לבעליהן רב אשי אמ' כי תניא ההיא אשאר ספרים ר' יהודה היא דתניא תפלין ומוזוות אינן נכתבין אלא אשורית ורבותינו התירו שיכתבו

⁹⁴The Bavli focuses first on the similarities between Scripture, tefillin and mezuzot in stating that 'with regard to sewing them with sinews and rendering the hands unclean they are identical'. This anonymous statement reflects the eventual consensus about sewing Tora scrolls, but misses the detail preserved in b. Mak. 11a. This comment is separated from the sugya by a quotation of the *mishna* in most textual witnesses.

⁹⁵For the importance of ColX and the testimony of Ox23 for the Sefardi tradition, see Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*, p. 271–75. This is not to deny that ColX has many clarifying glosses worked into its text. For the Cairo Geniza fragments, see Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*; R. Brody and E.J. Wiesenbergh, *Post-Talmudic rabbinic manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections vol. 1: Taylor-Schechter New Series* (Cambridge University Library Genizah series, 5; Cambridge University Press, 1998).

יונית התירו והא כת' והיו אלא אימא ספרים נכתבין בכל לשון ורבותינו התירו שיכתבו יונית התירו מכלל דתנא קמא אסר הא בכל לשון קא אמ' אלא אימא רבותינו לא התירו שיכתבו אלא יונית ותניא אמ' ר' יהודה אף כשהתירו רבותינו יונית לא התירו אלא בספר תורה משום מעשה שהיו דתניא מעשה בתלמי המלך

- [1] They pointed out a contradiction: 'Miqrā ['recited Scripture'] which is written in targum, or targum which is written in miqrā, or [both of them written] in [palaeo-]Hebrew script, do not render the hands unclean unless written in Ashurit⁹⁶ on a scroll and with ink'.
- [2] Said Rava, There is no difficulty, here [in the mishna] in our characters, there [in the baraita] in their characters.
- [3] Said Abaye to him, How do you interpret that [baraita⁹⁷ as applying to translations written] in their characters? If so,⁹⁸ what [then] is the argument, 'Miqrā written in targum and targum written in miqrā' [because] even miqrā which is written in miqrā⁹⁹ or targum which is written in targum do not [defile the hands],¹⁰⁰ since it is taught 'until it is written in Ashurit script,¹⁰¹ on a scroll and with ink'; but both this [mishna] and that [baraita require Scripture to be written] in our script.¹⁰²
- [4] But there is no difficulty: Here [the mishna reflects the view of] our rabbis [who allowed any language], there [the baraita reflects the opinion of] Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel.¹⁰³
- [5] If [the baraita reflects the view of] Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel, 'until it is written in Ashurit script',¹⁰⁴ what about the Greek script?¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶For אשורית, Vati34, Lon400, Muni40, Pes1516 and Vilna read אשורית; however, the combined evidence of the Sefardi witnesses Lon5558, Gött, Ox23 and ColX, supported by Mun95 and TS F2(2)/73 suggests that the plus בכתב is a late gloss.

⁹⁷Ox23 reads לבריתא for לההיא (Lon5558 להאי), supported by בריתא in Muni40^m.

⁹⁸אי הכי, supported by ColX, Gött, Lon400, Lon5558, Muni40, Ox23, Vati34 and TS F2(2)/73; Pes1516 and Vilna have a minus.

⁹⁹Vati34 and TS F2(2)/73 repeat מקרא שכתבו תרגום at this point, correctly followed by ותרגום שכתבו תרגום. The order of the two clauses is inverted in Lon5558 and Ox23.

¹⁰⁰ColX, Lon400, Mun95, Lon5558 and Vati34 read לא, but Muni40^m and Ox23 לא מטמא; Gött, Muni40, TS F2(2)/73 and Pes1516, Vilna have a minus.

¹⁰¹ColX reads אשורית כתב, Lon400 אשורית בכתב, but all other witnesses אשורית.

¹⁰²The clause אידי ואידי בגופינן שלנו is only attested in ColX and Gött.

¹⁰³Lon5558, Muni40 invert the order of 'our rabbis' and 'R. Shimon b. Gamaliel'.

¹⁰⁴עד שיכתבו כתב אשורית: so ColX, Lon400 (with בכתב) and Muni40; a minus in Pes1516 and Vilna, which may well be original. Without כתב, Gött, Lon5558 and Vati34; without כתב but followed by על הספר ובדי, Mun95, Muni40^m and Ox23. Lacuna in TS F2(2)/73.

¹⁰⁵Only ColX reads כתב; Lon400, Mun95, Muni40, Vati34 and TS F2(2)/73 read נמי. Lon5558 reads נמי ויהא איכא כתב יונית for אפילו יונית נמי.

- [6] No, there is no difficulty: Here [the mishna is concerned] with scrolls [and allows any language], there [the baraita is dealing] with tefillin and mezuzot [which must be written in Ashurit].
- [7] What is the reason for tefillin and mezuzot? Since it is written in them, 'and they shall be', they must remain as they are.
- [8] What targum written in miqra is there [in tefillin and mezuzot]?
[Variant reading:¹⁰⁶ Granted, in the Tora there is [the Aramaic phrase] יקר שהדיותא, but here,¹⁰⁷ what targum written in miqra¹⁰⁸ can there be?]
- [9] No,¹⁰⁹ there is no difficulty. Here [the mishna speaks of] the scrolls of Scripture, and there [the baraita speaks of] the megilla.¹¹⁰
- [10] What is the reason in the case of the megilla? Because it is written in it, 'according to their writing and their language' (Est. 8.9).
- [11] What targum written in miqra is there? Granted,¹¹¹ in the Tora there is [the Aramaic phrase] יקר שהדיותא, but here, what targum written in miqra can there be?
- [12] Rava¹¹² said, 'And the king's word was heard' (Est. 1.20)
Rav Naḥman bar Yiṣḥaq¹¹³ said, 'And all the women shall give honour to their husbands' (Est. 1.20).
- [13] Rav Aši¹¹⁴ said, For that [mishna or baraita] was taught¹¹⁵ as regards the remainder of Scripture, and this agrees with Rabbi Yehuda, for it is taught, 'Tefillin¹¹⁶ and mezuzot are only written in Ashurit, but our rabbis allowed them to be written¹¹⁷ in Greek [as well]...'

¹⁰⁶ ColX and Ox23 have from 'Granted' to 'be?' in [11], all other witnesses in [8].

¹⁰⁷ Lon5558 substitutes תפילין ומזוזות for הכא תפילין ומזוזות.

¹⁰⁸ The words מקרא שכתבו are lacking in Pes1516 and Vilna.

¹⁰⁹ Gött precedes אמי רב נחמן לא קשיא with the attribution רב נחמן.

¹¹⁰ The edns Pes1516 and Vilna invert the order of 'scrolls' and 'megilla', which disrupts the sequence mishna–baraita of the previous three solutions in [2], [4] and [6]; the manuscripts should thus be followed here. Tellingly, talmudic commentaries disagree as to which clause reflects the mishna and which the baraita.

¹¹¹ ColX and Ox23 have from 'Granted' to 'be?' in [11], all other witnesses in [8].

¹¹² רבא: so ColX and Gött, whereas Lon400, Mun95, Muni40, Ox23, Vati34, Lon5558 and the edns Pes1516 and Vilna read רב פפא. TS F2(2)73 has a lacuna.

¹¹³ Lon400, Mun95, Vati34 and TS F2(2)73 read רב נחמן בר יצחק instead of רב נחמן.

¹¹⁴ אשי: so ColX, Lon400, Mun95, Muni40, Ox23, Vati34, TS F2(2)73, Lon5558, Vilna and Pes1516; Gött reads רבה.

¹¹⁵ For תניא, Mun95 reads מתניא; Ox23 has a minus.

¹¹⁶ Before this quotation, the Sefardi mss Gött, Muni40 and Ox23 have the plus: שאר ספרים נכתבין בכל לשון.

¹¹⁷ שיכתבו, so ColX, Muni40 and Ox23; all other witnesses have a minus here.

- [14] But it is not written, 'And they shall be'? Rather, say: 'Books of Scripture may be written in any language, and our rabbis allowed them to be written¹¹⁸ in Greek'.
- [15] They permitted?! By implication, the first Tanna forbade it, however he actually said [that they may be written] 'in any language'.¹¹⁹
Rather, say, 'Our rabbis allowed them to be written only in Greek'.¹²⁰
- [16] It was taught,¹²¹ Rabbi Yehuda says, When our rabbis allowed Greek, they only allowed it for the Tora-scroll, because of an incident that occurred.¹²²
- [17] As it has been taught, the incident of king Talmi who took¹²³ seventy-two¹²⁴ elders and placed them in seventy-two lodgings but did not reveal to them why he gathered them.

The central question is this: does Scripture render the hands unclean regardless of its language and script? We already observed that some rabbis were indeed of the opinion that translations defile the hands, while others disagreed. The unit in b. Meg. 8b–9b, of which I quoted the relevant part (8b–9a) above—it is followed by the often quoted legend of the Septuagint—winds itself to a conclusion, at least in the sense of an ending, in the form of a *baraita* and a legal precedent. To appreciate the import of this unit, I will first analyse its overall structure and main contentions before I provide a closer reading of the text.

The discussion is punctuated by statements attributed to named Babylonian rabbis from the fourth to sixth generation in [2–3] and [12–13],¹²⁵ with anonymously voiced arguments in between [4–11] and following [14–

¹¹⁸שיכתבו, so ColX, Mun140^m and Ox23; all other witnesses have a minus here.

¹¹⁹The last phrase, 'הא בכל לשון קא אמר' only occurs in ColX.

¹²⁰Vat134 reads 'יונית אשורי' for 'יונית אשורי'. It is a plausible mistake to write 'אשורי' first due to the recurrence of the phrase, only to realize the mistake immediately, and correct the error by the second word, the first word does not seem to have been cancelled. Perhaps, if not the mistake it seems to be, this odd designation refers to 'Greek square script'.

¹²¹Ox23, Vat134*: 'אמר יהודה'; Mun95: 'אמר יהודה'; Gött: 'אמר יהודה'; Lon5558: 'אמר יהודה'; ColX, Lon400, Pes1516 and Vilna: 'אמר יהודה'; Mun140, Vat134^m: 'אמר יהודה'.

¹²²Mun140 reads 'המלך דתלמי מעשה משום משה ספר תורה' rather than 'המלך דתלמי מעשה משום משה ספר תורה'. The reading 'המלך דתלמי מעשה משום משה ספר תורה' is to be preferred. All other witnesses expand the first reference to the *מעשה* as that of King Talmi; see the Appendix.

¹²³Only ColX reads 'שלקח'; all other witnesses have 'שכינס'.

¹²⁴Gött reads 'שבעים' rather than 'שבעים ושנים', both as regards the elders and the lodgings.

¹²⁵The names vary between the MSS: Rava, Abaye, again Rava or their pupil Rav Papa, Rav Nahman bar Yisḥaq, Rav Ashi or Rava.

15/16]. The unit revolves around a *baraita* set up as a foil to the *mishna* (m. Meg. 1.8) in [1], followed by a progressive series of binary oppositions to explain the difference between the *mishna* and *baraita*—since the *mishna* allows translated Scripture to be written in any language and still ‘defile the hands’, that is be considered Holy Writ, whereas the *baraita* stipulates the use of Ashurit and apparently disqualifies any *targum* for use as Holy Writ [2–12]. This series culminate in the opposition between the Tora on the one hand, as permitted translation in writing, and the remainder, that is the Prophets and the Writings on the other hand as Scripture which should not be translated [13], which explains the discrepancy between the *mishna* and the *baraita*. Eventually, Rav Ashi is quoted and said to concur with a *baraita* attributed to R. Yehuda bar Ilai (but subsequently revised, [13–16]), an agreement which receives further confirmation in the form of the precedent set by the miracle of the Septuagint [17]. The final part of the *sugya* is taken up by the famous legend of the Greek translation of the Tora for King Ptolemy and its changes of which [17] represents only the beginning.

Apart from the *baraitot*, the provenance of the discussion is Babylonian and the authorial voice anonymous. As is far from uncommon, the discussion preserved here may never have taken place in person since Rav Ashi was allegedly born in the year Rava died and actual contact between Rava and Abaye, who headed the academies of Meḥoza and Pumbeditha, may have been limited; most of their disputes do not involve dialogue but appear to be academic creations.¹²⁶ The rhetorical nature of the *sugya* is reminiscent of the anonymous editorial layer, with dialectics delaying the eventual solution so as to cover and scrutinize various possible opinions and objections and reinterpreting Rav Ashi’s statement. Whether the purport of the *sugya* belongs to the late anonymous stage of the Bavli, and whether there is any relevance to the possibility of layers in this *sugya*, will require more attention in the analysis of the arguments below.

The anonymous voice presents the entire unit as an extrapolation of two Tannaitic views and in a sense the eventual solution reached at its end indeed completes the drift of the original *mishna*. Whereas Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel tightens its initial view, which considered the Scriptures as sacred even though translated and written down, to Greek translations alone, the final *baraita* further restricts the translation to the

¹²⁶ For a discussion of their actual contact, see Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors*, pp. 175–92.

Tora, excluding the Prophets and Writings: Scripture translated in any language > Scripture translated only in Greek > Only the Tora translated in Greek. In consequence, David Weiss Halivni argued that the *baraita* is the natural and logical conclusion of the *mishna*, which was left out in the *Mishna's* redaction only to be picked up once again by the Baylonian tradents.¹²⁷

If we bypass the anonymous give and take but focus on the solutions ascribed to named sages and prooftexts, the unit provides three authentic solutions to the contrast between the *mishna* and the initial *baraita*, which are credible and sustained:

- A. Scripture in translation in 'our' script versus Scripture in translation in 'their' script;
- B. Scripture (minus Esther) in translation versus Esther in translation;
- C. Tora in translation versus Prophets and Writings in translation.

The *gemara* discounts the first solution but the possibility to write Greek translations in Hebrew transliteration makes a reappearance in variant readings which echo those of other passages discussed above. It is plausible that at least some of the tradents considered this solution viable. The same applies to the following two solutions despite some awkward transitions; which increases the suspicion that we have here three equally plausible but once independent solutions, which were worked into a literary structure.

In terms of structure, the first two of these solutions presuppose the first *baraita*: they would not make sense without it. The third, however, appears to be connected to a different *baraita*. There is also a difference in reception. The first of these is refuted, and the last one buttressed by a *baraita* and precedent, while leaving the status of the second entirely open. I will discuss each of these three solutions in closer detail, as well as the function of the anonymous solutions and their rejections in between.

Translation in transliteration

The mishnaic notion that even translated Scriptures render the hands unclean is challenged head-on by the first *baraita*, which centres on *miqra*, that is, 'Scripture recited from a scroll':¹²⁸

¹²⁷D.W. Halivni, *ביאורים ומסורות: ביאורים בתלמוד לסדר מועד מיומא עד חגיגה* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1975), pp. 479–81.

¹²⁸See Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, I, p. 117.

They pointed out a contradiction: 'Miqrā which is written in targum, and targum which is written in miqrā or in [palaeo-]Hebrew script, do not render the hands unclean unless written in Ashurit on a scroll¹²⁹ and with ink'.

Crucial for the *baraita* is the requirement of Ashurit for any Scripture that is considered sacred, but compounded by the question what the *baraita* means with 'miqrā written in targum', and its corollary, 'targum written in miqrā'. Do these last phrases refer to the Aramaic translation and Aramaic portions of Scripture, as the *gemara* at one point assumes they do ([11–12]), or do they refer to the original text and its translation into another language? The *baraita* resembles m. Yad. 4:5 so closely—in his eleventh century CE commentary Rabbenu Ḥananel assumes their identity—that they may represent oral variants of one tradition, albeit with important differences.¹³⁰ In m. Yad. 4:5 the connection between targum and Ezra and Daniel, which is absent from the *baraita*, suggested to later readers that targum denotes the Aramaic portions in these books.¹³¹ It would make little sense to assume that targum stands for Aramaic in the *baraita*, since it would thereby intimate the sacredness of Aramaic translations if written in Ashurit, as they always were. The objection would have no teeth. Consequently, in the *baraita* targum stands for translation, not for specific Aramaic Bible portions. There is in fact independent evidence to corroborate this observation. Parallel discussions of Hebrew written in translation in y. Shab. 16:1, 15b–c (עברי שכתבו תרגום) and b. Shab. 115a (תרגום (שכתבו מקרא ומקרא שכתבו תרגום) focus on translations, not on any Aramaic portions in Tanakh. As a consequence, part of this *sugya*, which assumes that 'targum' denotes Aramaic, is at odds with the *baraita* itself.

The question remains whether Ashurit excludes any translation—the most forceful reading of the *baraita*. If Ashurit denotes the square script, this *baraita* leaves room for translations in transliteration as the Holy Writ; if Ashurit also denotes Hebrew here, there is no room for written translations which are stripped of their status as Holy Writ. This *crux*

¹²⁹The word הספר is supported by all mss; parallel discussions however have עור instead; Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, p. 478 n. 2. The physical bearer is not the focus here, but the question of writing in another language.

¹³⁰In the *baraita* מקרא takes the place of עברי, which is not insignificant, for מקרא refers to the written text as it is recited. For the *mishna*, see pp. 286–90 above. Ox23 inverts the word order of the *baraita* in [1] and [3] from מקרא שכתבו תרגום ומקרא שכתבו תרגום to תרגום שכתבו מקרא ומקרא שכתבו תרגום.

¹³¹See above, p. 288.

did not go unnoticed, neither in the *gemara* nor in its textual transmission, which varies at a crucial point in the *baraita* where several textual witnesses read *בכתב אשורית* for *אשורית* [1]. The plus is missing in the Yemenite/Sefardi tradition, and is almost certainly a late gloss; neither is it supported by Rabbenu Ḥananel's commentary or by most witnesses in the second quotation in this *sugya*, attributed to Abaye, in [3].¹³² With the gloss, the *baraita* regards translations written in square script as holy. Did the glossator capture the original meaning of the *baraita*? The subsequent exchange between Rava and Abaye focuses, implicitly, on the connotation of Ashurit [2]:

Rava said: There is no difficulty, here in our characters, there in their characters.

In paraphrase, 'here, in the *mishna*, translations defile the hands as long as they are written in square Hebrew script; there, in the *baraita*, they do not defile the hands if written in another script'. Rava thus takes Ashurit as a script and not a language, but he is taken to task by Abaye [3]:

Said Abaye to him, How do you interpret that [*baraita* as applying to translations written] in their characters? If so, what [then] is the argument, 'Miqrā written in *targum* and *targum* written in *miqrā*' [because] even *miqrā* which is written in *miqrā* or *targum* which is written in *targum* do not [defile the hands], since it is taught 'until it is written in Ashurit script, on a scroll and with ink'. But both this [*mishna*] and that [*baraita* require scrolls to be written] in our script!

Abaye rejects the suggestion that the *baraita* refers to the script only, since its wording reveals a focus on *language* as much as on *script*. Why would the *baraita* focus on translations if the script alone disqualifies a scroll? There would have been no need to mention a translation; a Hebrew scroll in the wrong script, or a translation in its own script are disqualified on the basis of the last clause. In his view, the *baraita* also stipulates the Hebrew language for biblical scrolls. Rava and Abaye agree on the script, but disagree on the aspect of language. The difference between the reading with and without *בכתב* in Abaye's quotation is inconsequential; the aspect of language is determined by the references to translation that precede the stipulation of Ashurit, which he understands as a reference to script.

¹³² For *בכתב*, see n. 96 above. The same lexeme is added three more times, see nn. 101, 104 and 105 above.

The last sentence—a plus in mss ColX and Gött which agrees with Rabbenu Ḥananel—signals that the divisive issue is not the script. This supplementary assertion endorses Abaye's point of view but goes one step further, as it claims that the *mishna* and *baraita* agree on the requirement of 'our' script, that is Ashurit. It is in fact not certain that Abaye went this far. This alignment of the *mishna* with the *baraita* adds a further twist, since the *mishna* on its own did not insist on any particular script for Scripture.

To what extent this last point of view is sustained is doubtful. Although it strikes a chord with other opinions, as we have seen, a few lines down ColX implies that R. Shimon b. Gamaliel allowed the *כתב יונית* 'Greek script' [5]. While the glosses undoubtedly represent later readings of the Bavli, they simultaneously voice a concurrent opinion that the script of translations is relevant, although with different results for their status.

Two anonymous arguments

After the exchange between Rava and Abaye a series of anonymous resolutions follows, which continue to relate the contrast between the *mishna* and the *baraita* to suitable pairs of contrasting texts:

1. Scripture in any language versus Scripture in Greek only [4];
2. Scripture in any language versus *tefillin* and *mezuzot* in Ashurit [6];
3. Scripture in any language versus the scroll of Esther in Ashurit [9].

The first two of these anonymous solutions are, as Halivni argued,¹³³ easily refuted, and at first sight neither seems essential for our understanding of the *sugya*. Or are they? Regardless of the question whether they belong to the editorial layer of the Bavli, which Halivni believes, the key question is: what exactly do these passages achieve as part of the text?

The first resolution [4] assumes that the *mishna* of our rabbis is contrasted with R. Shimon ben Gamaliel's position as supposedly reflected by the *baraita*. This interpretation makes little sense and the instant objection in [5] points out its weakness. R. Shimon b. Gamaliel did not insist upon the use of Ashurit as the *baraita* does and he explicitly allowed Greek. It begs the question what this rhetorical question does and accomplishes despite its all too obvious flaws. If anything, this anonymous step highlights the incompatibility of the *baraita*'s insistence upon Ashurit with R. Shimon ben

¹³³ Cf. Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, pp. 479–81.

Gamaliel's view that Greek be allowed. The resolution does not really focus on the dichotomy between the *mishna* and the *baraita*, but on the definition of 'Greek' in R. Shimon ben Gamaliel's opinion: did he permit Greek in Greek script or only in Ashurit?

In the second anonymous dichotomy [6] the *baraita* applies to phylacteries (*tefillin*) and door-post inscriptions (*mezuzot*), which must be written in Hebrew and in the Ashurit script. This resolution limits the requirement of Ashurit in the *baraita* (or m. Yad. 4.5) to *tefillin* and *mezuzot* alone, a restriction which the anonymous voice rejects since the question 'what *targum* written in *miqra* is there', which in this context must refer to Aramaic rather than 'translation', yields a negative result.

However, focusing on the refutation we might be missing the point of the rhetorics for two reasons. The reason for the insistence upon Hebrew is provided in [7]: 'Because it is written in them, "and they shall be", they shall remain in their status'. This argument, based on the verb 'be', is similar to, if not lifted from, the discussion about the passages that must be recited in the holy tongue, which we analysed in Chapter Two, where Rabbi argued that the occurrence of *יהי* in the priestly blessing implies that its very wording should remain unchanged.¹³⁴ The editors of the Bavli are known to have reused elements from other discursive contexts, but, interestingly, while the resolution is refuted, this particular point is not; indeed *tefillin* and *mezuzot* are not translated—a point which is taken up below in [13–14]. The anonymous voice—and I leave the date of the voice open here—introduces a criterion for determining when a biblical text may not be translated and limits the meaning of the word 'targum' to Aramaic, as later on in [14].

Moreover, the contrast between Scripture on the one hand and *tefillin* and *mezuzot* on the other is the very purport of the *mishna*: 'there is no difference ... except that Scripture may be written in any language, but *tefillin* and *mezuzot* only in Ashurit'. Rejecting a resolution which rephrases the original *mishna* implies a move away from that very *mishna*. Far from a gratuitous element, this block of argument establishes distance from the *mishna*'s permission to write Scripture in any language, a move which will be completed explicitly by the end of the *sugya*. We are gradually being prepared for the conclusion that only Greek will do.

¹³⁴Although that discussion is related to public recitation of ritual passages, here the language requirement applies to writing the passages of *tefillin* and *mezuzot*.

These two anonymous resolutions, then, are far from a negligible *intermezzo* since they serve a purpose in moving the goalposts, even though they leave the discrepancy between the *mishna* and the *baraita* unresolved and are easily discarded in the process.

Rav Ashi and the scroll of Esther

Formally, the third anonymous interjection follows the same pattern as the previous two:¹³⁵ *here Scripture there X*. The argument goes as follows: ‘*here Scripture, there megilla*’, that is to say, ‘*here [the mishna allows any language for] Scripture, there [in the baraita, it requires Ashurit for] the Book of Esther*’.¹³⁶ In contrast to the previous two anonymous solutions the third is never refuted, receives a more substantial discussion, and, anonymous or not, is backed up by two scriptural quotations by named sages, which link up with the anonymous solution.

The anonymous voice first supplies a text in support of the stipulation that Ashurit is required for the Book of Esther: ‘Because it is written in it, “according to their writing and their language” (Est. 8.9)’. This proof-text marks the original language of the text as unchangeable,¹³⁷ hence Esther qualifies for the *baraita* as it must be written in Ashurit—both the language and the script here—but does it also have *targum* written in *miqra* to concur with the first part of the *baraita*? This question is qualified by the following observation: ‘Granted, in the Tora there is [the Aramaic phrase] *יקר שהדוּתא*, but here, what *targum* written in *miqra* can there be?’ This qualification occurs in different positions, namely in [8] or [11] according to the textual witnesses, but in either place the phrase expands on the question that already stood about *targum* in *miqra*.¹³⁸ If the location seems

¹³⁵ Possibly, the solution is not anonymous, for MS Gött puts it into the mouth of R. Naḥman (אמ' רב נחמן). R. Naḥman may either be Rava's teacher, Rav Naḥman (bar Yaaqov) or his peer Rav Naḥman bar Yīṣḥaq; in [12] the two are confused in the textual variants. Halivni suggested that [9] does not belong to the *stam* but ought to be attributed to Abaye; Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, pp. 479–81. One of his observations concerns the use of כאן ... כאן in [9], like Rava [2], rather than הא ... הא, like the *stam* [4, 6].

¹³⁶ For the reverse order of ספרים and מגלה, see above, p. 306 n. 110.

¹³⁷ As in y. Meg. 2.1, 73a and explicitly so in t. San. 4.8; see pp. 143 and 282 above.

¹³⁸ In [11] according to ColX and Ox23, but in [8] according to all other witnesses. Its wavering position may betray its origin as an oral interpretative comment once written in the margin which was subsequently attached to one line in most manuscripts, to another in ColX and Ox23. Since the preceding question occurs in both [8] and [11], I can see no

inconsequential, its message does not: the expanded question suggests that the Tora contains *targum* written in *miqra* and thus falls under the reach of the *baraita* which stipulates Scripture to be written in Ashurit. In any case, Rava and Rav Naḥman bar Yiṣḥaq, or two of Rava's pupils, provide the proof that the *baraita* is pertinent to the *megilla*, because there is Aramaic in the latter:

Rava [Var. Rav Papa] said, 'And the king's word was heard' (Est. 1.20)

Rav Naḥman bar Yiṣḥaq [Var. Rav Naḥman] said, 'And all the women shall give honour to their husbands' (Est. 1.20).

Signalling Aramaic phrases in the *megilla*, they imply that there is indeed *targum* in the Book of Esther and that the *baraita* therefore corresponds with the *megilla*, which, following the *baraita*, thus conveys uncleanness only when written in Ashurit. No objection is raised, to be followed by the phrase *לא קשיא* אלא לא; apparently this position stands, and for good reasons, since many sources indeed hold that the *megilla* may only be written in Ashurit.¹³⁹ Both the Mishna and the Tosefta exclude written translations of the *megilla* and rule that the written *megilla* should be in Ashurit, or else it does not convey uncleanness, in contrast to the other books which convey uncleanness in another script.

It comes as something of a surprise against this background that this solution appears to have been silently abandoned in the discussion that follows. Perhaps more surprisingly, the resolution is delivered anonymously despite the fact that several sources would have presented themselves. That the anonymous notion of [9] is presupposed by the following attributed materials could point to the existence of anonymous layers in an earlier phase of the textual tradition, which occurs more often in the Bavli, especially in the later generations—a view recently rearticulated by Brody in a critical review of the, perhaps too widely, accepted position that all the anonymous layers are both late and editorial.¹⁴⁰ Yet in the case under discussion there is reason to assume that it was a statement once ascribed to Rav Ashi, but with a changed point of reference, which suggests the relatively late work of an editor who recycled and anonymized materials that had formerly been attributed to named sages.

logical priority for either position. Accordingly, I do not believe that its position supports Halivni's contention that [9] does not belong to the *stam* (מיומא עד חגיגה), pp. 479–81).

¹³⁹ m. Meg. 2.2; t. Meg. 2.6; b. Shab. 115b; b. Meg. 17a; 19a; y. Meg. 2.2, 73a.

¹⁴⁰ Brody, 'סתם התלמוד ודברי האמוראים', pp. 213–32.

115a suggests that Rav Ashi indeed distinguished the *megilla* from all other books in precisely this way:

Rav Ashi said, As it was taught: there is no difference between Biblical books and the *megilla* except that Biblical books are written in any language, but the *megilla* must be written in Ashurit, on a scroll, and with ink.¹⁴⁵

Without being put in the mouth of Rav Ashi, this Tannaitic tradition also occurs in *y. Meg.* 2.1, 73a. Above all, it aligns conspicuously well with the positions taken by R. Papa and R. Nahman b. Yishāq in [12].

The ramifications of these parallels are important. The Tannaitic tradition singled out the Scroll of Esther for Ashurit, as elsewhere in the Bavli and the Yerushalmi, whereas the reading that singles out the Tora for Greek was superimposed on the present *sugya* by the editorial framework. A situation as fuzzy as we have here provides a very classic window on the text's history. The editors reused materials which once conveyed the special status of the *megilla* and wove them into the present *sugya* with a new and different gist. Perhaps the editors made their changes in view of the initial *baraita*, which speaks of Scripture but not of the *megilla*, but ultimately, the *stam* appears keen to move the argument beyond Esther alone. In this *sugya*, both arguments now belong to the later *stam*, and so does what follows next.

Precedent or incident: the Tora in Greek

If Rav Ashi's contribution once had another drift, which built on the third anonymous resolution, in its present context it introduces a new resolution which aligns the 'remainder' of Scripture with the *baraita* and thereby requires it to be written in Ashurit—in contrast to the Tora which does not require Ashurit. But the shaky transition from one view to another, which was already discernible in the odd way a perfectly legitimate solution appears to be anonymized and sidelined, gains further momentum in the following sequel of *baraitot* with two successive oral-performative permutations ('emendations'). These remarks are somewhat confusing until we realize that we have a *baraita* whose link to the *mishna* had to be established.¹⁴⁶ For the sake of clarity I will repeat the text in translation:

¹⁴⁵Cf. *Tos. to b. Meg.* 9a and *b. Men.* 31b.

¹⁴⁶Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, p. 479.

- [13] Rav Ashi said, For that was taught as regards the remainder of Scripture, and this is in accordance with Rabbi Yehuda, for it is taught, Tefillin and mezuzot are only written in Ashurit, but our rabbis allowed them to be written in Greek.
- [14] But is it not written, 'And they shall be'? Rather, say, 'Books of Scripture may be written in any language, and our rabbis allowed them to be written in Greek'.
- [15] They permitted?! By implication, the first Tanna forbade it, however he actually said [that they may be written] 'in any language'.
Rather, say, 'Our rabbis allowed them to be written only in Greek'.
- [16] It was taught, Rabbi Yehuda says, When our rabbis allowed Greek, they only allowed it for the Tora-scroll, because of an incident that occurred.
- [17] As it has been taught, the incident of king Talmi who took seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two lodgings but did not reveal to them why he gathered them.

The first version of the *baraita* in [13] is surprising in its leniency as no other source ever allowed Greek for tefillin and mezuzot, nor does this position tally with what we otherwise know of the early rabbis. It almost reads as a reflection on the fallability of memory, or the identification of proper suspension points for add-on traditions, since a genuine connection should have included a pointer to ספרים, 'Scripture', to which Rav Ashi referred.¹⁴⁷ The following permutation—'Rather, say...'—¹⁴⁸—indeed corrects the reference point in this manner: 'Books of Scripture may be written in any language, and our rabbis permitted [them to be written in] Greek'. Without this correction the *baraita* would not bear upon Rav Ashi's statement about the 'remainder of Scripture'.

Still, according to the anonymous voice the restored focus of the *baraita* remains flawed as it suggests that the rabbis initially forbade Greek—on the basis that התיר allows what previously had been forbidden or more circumscribed, linking the verb התיר 'to allow' to its antonym

¹⁴⁷Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, pp. 479–80 suggests that the real focus is found in the last phrase of the *baraita*, 'but our rabbis allowed Greek', while the beginning results in an unfortunate mismatch. As for citing *baraitot*, see Y. Elman, 'Progressive Derash and Retrospective Peshat: Nonhalakhic Considerations in Talmud Torah', in S. Carmy (ed.), *Modern Scholarship in the Study of Torah* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), pp. 227–87 (233).

¹⁴⁸On מביא לניסוח המשנה as interpretation or emendation, see Epstein, *מביא לניסוח המשנה*, I, p. 509.

אָסר 'to forbid'.¹⁴⁹ A further emendation is demanded: 'Rather, say, Our rabbis allowed them to be written only in Greek'. Compared to the original mishna of m. Meg. 1.8, this almost identical version of the *baraita* ascribes the restriction of translation to Greek to the collective of 'our rabbis' rather than just R. Shimon b. Gamaliel. As in the commentary of the Yerushalmi,¹⁵⁰ the minority opinion has now become the majority one.

This move towards further restriction is nicely completed in [16] by what appears to be yet another related *baraita* by R. Yehuda. In his second *baraita* he claims that our rabbis only granted permission for a Greek translation in the case of the Tora, which finally explains how in [13] Rav Ashi could (be understood to) say that the very first *baraita* of the entire unit, which stipulates Ashurit for Scripture, applies to the remainder of Scripture but not to the Tora. While Rav Ashi's statement may once have meant something else, at this point in the *gemara* there can be no doubt about the intended meaning. The dichotomy at the very start of our text, between translations and Ashurit, has now been resolved in the form of a dichotomy between the Tora and the rest of the Scriptures.

The purpose of the emended *baraita* within the *sugya* is now more apparent, with its rephrasings in both halves. It fashions a link between R. Yehuda's last *baraita* about the Tora and Rav Ashi's statement about the 'rest of Scripture', a link that is all the more necessary because Rav Ashi may have stated something quite different without the provision of a new context. The two *baraitot* of R. Yehuda complement if not imply one another, so much so that at least Halivni would like to read them as a single *baraita*.¹⁵¹ But that is only half the story. As we have seen, the mishna's majority opinion allows for any language, for which the *baraita* substitutes R. Simeon ben Gamaliel's view. This agrees with the Yerushalmi, and suggests that the permission to translate was tightened in two ways—in source text and target language—during the Amoraic period.

¹⁴⁹Note that philologically the meaning of הָתִיר does not imply prior prohibition; 'to declare permitted' is an equally acceptable meaning, as the next emendation indicates.

¹⁵⁰y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c; see above, p. 294.

¹⁵¹Halivni, מִיּוֹמָא עַד חֲגִיגָה, pp. 479–80. While the flow of thought has a certain coherence to it, R. Yehuda's (second) statement is marked by the word וְתִנִּיא (ו) to introduce a distinct *baraita*. Halivni points to Mun95 for the absence of וְתִנִּיא (for variants, see p. 307 n. 121 above), before considering the alternative explanation that וְתִנִּיא does not introduce a new *baraita*. In my view, the preceding emendation suggests that וְתִנִּיא is original.

This *sugya* allows us to glimpse how a *baraita* was cited, partially corrected, and provided with a new suspension point. The slightly abrupt change from the third anonymous resolution, with which Rav Ashi seems to concur elsewhere in the Bavli, to a final *baraita*, which returns to the *mishna* of Meg. 1.8, finally sets up the reader for the legend of how the Septuagint came into being. The connection of this well-known *baraita* with R. Yehuda's *baraita*, which differs between manuscripts, is almost certainly editorial since the two *baraitot* are not attested in this way in parallel sources.¹⁵² But even if the story of the Tora for Ptolemy (Talmi) once had a different scope, here the tradition serves to bolster the conclusion at which R. Yehuda arrived.¹⁵³ In doing so, the Bavli goes one step further than the Yerushalmi by suggesting that the translation into Greek was allowed only on the basis of a precedent set long ago. Instead of the original restriction to Greek (in *Mishna* and Yerushalmi), the Bavli makes the permission to use a Greek translation sound as a concession by the following story of the Greek Tora written on behalf of King Ptolemy. At least one copyist understood the connection in this light, for Muni40 reads: אף כשהתירו רבותינו לא התירו אלא ספר תורה משום מעשה דתלמי המלך אבל שאר ספרים לא, 'Even when our rabbis allowed [Greek], they only allowed it for the scroll of the Tora because of the incident with King Ptolemy, but not for the remainder of Scripture'. Whether or not the emphasis is on the unique agreement between all individual translators by divine inspiration, or the changes these translators introduced in harmony, in the present context the story suggests that the very fact of translation was a unique situation; an incident perhaps rather than a precedent.

When the Bavli shifts focus to the second part of the *mishna* with R. Shimon b. Gamaliel's restriction to Greek (f. 9b), following the legend of the Septuagint, it establishes the *halakha* in favour of R. Shimon ben Gamaliel. The selection of Greek is justified by the citation of Gen. 9.27,¹⁵⁴ in which Yaphet is identified as Greece, and located amidst 'the tents of Shem'; moreover, the word יפת is taken as 'to beautify', with the implication that Greek is the most beautiful language spoken by Yaphet's

¹⁵² So too Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 152–57. For the variants, see the Appendix. The Yerushalmi includes the story within a different context; y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71d.

¹⁵³ Wasserstein and Wasserstein, *The Legend*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁴ It comes as no surprise that this *sugya* has a direct parallel in y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b and Gen. R. 36.8.

descendants. The notion of Greek as a beautiful language *par excellence*, which suggests a Palestinian provenance (and, indeed, the three tradents listed—R. Abbahu, R. Yoḥanan and R. dHiyya bar Abba—are all Palestinian Amoraim), chimes in well with the unreserved praise for Aquila's Greek version in the Yerushalmi, albeit that Aquila has been replaced by the Septuagint. If there had been any attempt to turn the Greek Tora into an incident that was not to be repeated, this bid was not successful.

7.5 Ashurit and alphabet

The origin of the square script called Ashurit is far more transparent than the reasons for its adoption over the palaeo-Hebrew script. It does not seem likely that there were any theological reasons behind this shift, just as the use of palaeo-Hebrew for the Tetragrammaton appears to be a graphical marker to the reader not to pronounce the Name rather than a sign of the script's higher sanctity. Nor is there any reason to associate the old script with the Sadducees.

The tension between Greek and Ashurit takes centre stage in a series of reflections on m. Meg. 1.8. The Aramaic translations had already been ruled out by the new understanding of the word *targum* as 'Aramaic' or 'Aramaic translation' in m. Yad. 4.5, on the (usually silent) assumption that the licence for any language in m. Meg. 1.8 had been negated by Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel, who did, however, permit the use of Greek as Holy Writ. Squaring up to the Mishna, its own words in m. Yad. 4.5 proved pivotal: לעולם אינו מטמא עד שיכתבנו אשורית על העור ובדיו [Holy Scriptures] never impart uncleanness [to hands] unless they are written in Ashurit, on parchment, and with ink'.

The stipulation to write ritually valid texts of the Scriptures in the square script became a powerful argument in the attempts to reduce the influence of written translations, an attempt which appears to have gained currency in the post-Talmudic period. Breaking the links between script and language opened up new avenues to constrain the use of written scriptural translations. In particular, the *sugya* in the Bavli, discussed at length above, is a powerful confrontation between a *baraita* that emphasizes the stipulation of Ashurit and the *mishna* that allowed any language for the Scriptures. In between, the definition of Ashurit as a mere script, or also a language, introduced further variations in between the two extremes of

Ashurit alone versus 'any language', as did the semantic shift of *targum* from 'translation' to 'Aramaic'. Two untold, but sometimes hinted, compromises were the oral performance of Greek translations, even though the Mishna clearly allows for written versions, and the transliteration of Greek translations into Ashurit, as Rava suggested; however, refuted by Abaye. A stronger case was made for the distinction between the Scroll of Esther and all the other books of Scripture, an opinion that resonates with other voices in rabbinic literature, but seems to have been overtaken by an editorial drive to focus on the permission to translate the Scriptures into Greek for the Tora alone.

Never would m. Meg. 1.8 and m. Yad. 4.5 be fully harmonized, nor would Greek translations ever sit easily with the requirements set for sacred Scripture. In the event, the Greek translation stood as an established and rabbinically approved institution, which withstood attempts to rule it out. It is beyond doubt that quite a few rabbinic voices would have liked to see the back of these translations, just as it hardly comes as a surprise that the equality of Greek and Hebrew was controversial. The rabbis reclassified translated Scripture as Oral Tora, despite the fact that the notion of translations as written Tora lingered on. But the resignification did not fully apply to Greek versions. At the end of the day, the nature of Greek translations as Holy Writ died out over the course of many centuries without ever having been ruled out satisfactorily.

Part III

Rabbis and translation

Targum in Talmud

Whatever scope the rabbis assigned for the use of scriptural translation in the synagogue, the court of law, certain rituals, or private study, their perception of the value and function of such translation is acutely expressed in the way and instances they used translations themselves—the locus of rabbinic discourse. The use of translations in rabbinic literature reflects the values of those who transmitted these traditions and those who compiled the literary compositions that we now have. Even when such instances may not be a representative sample of actual rabbinic use, they still shine light on the way translations were deemed presentable in the literature in which the quotations are now embedded.

The light shed by the rabbinic quotations of translations on the extant Aramaic Bible translations enjoyed a fair amount of scholarly attention, but this angle of view—however justified by itself—implied a limited scope. Foremost in the analysis figured questions of the Targums' authorship, dating, textual history and provenance, which had an adverse effect on the attention lavished on the way these translations function in rabbinic literature. Scholars sometimes even satisfied themselves with the mere observation that certain translations in the Targums had a *parallel* in rabbinic literature—which is the basis for analysis, not its end. What use is there to note that there are parallels unless we have a cogent explanation and assessment of the parallel?¹ Likewise it is all well and good to list or identify quotations in the Talmudim, but we do not become much wiser until a comprehensive analysis is made of the function and *embedding* of scriptural translation in their Talmudic contexts. Questions of targumic authorship or targumic textual history are relevant, but cannot be studied properly without probing the actual use of these quotations and the way they are embedded in their rabbinic co-texts.

¹ See Jacob Neusner, *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), p. 24: 'Information by itself nourishes not at all. Facts do not validate their own importance. Unless they prove relevant to important questions, they are not important'.

Two aspects require attention in any review of the rabbinic use and assessment of scriptural translation: (1) the significance and import of these quotations for the talmudic discourse and midrashic structures and (2) the history and stability of the text. To start with the former, the function and intrinsic value of the cited (or on-the-spot)² translations varies in importance and nature. In some instances a quoted translation is a vital cog in the hermeneutic act, when the interpretative move revolves around the quotation, whereas in the majority of cases the quotation given is peripheral to the generation of the actual midrash and cannot be regarded as an indispensable element in the hermeneutic operation. In the latter cases the synchronic analysis leads to questions of a diachronic nature; for what turns out to be dispensable in one way or another may be revealed as a late, encyclopedic, if not antiquarian, interest in the accumulation of knowledge. Should some citations be ascribed to the later layers of rabbinic literature in general and the Bavli in particular? Indeed, some of the quotations of scriptural translation look conspicuously like relatively late supplements to the text, supplied either by the anonymous editors who have in recent years been credited with almost too much authorial activity, or by later tradents of the text, keeping in mind that the cut-off point between redaction and textual transmission is obscure and blurred.

As for the state of the text, previous studies of rabbinic quotations usually overlooked the variant readings of the Babylonian Talmud which are crucial for the evaluation of these quotations, as the close readings that follow in this chapter demonstrate. To a large extent this neglect is a result of the dire state of critical editions in rabbinic literature, in particular for the Bavli.³ In the next chapter I analyse b. Meg. 3a as part of the Aquila/Onqelos-traditions to demonstrate the multiple layers in that talmudic passage and the value of a careful analysis of its development in close detail. In the present chapter any such sketches must remain more impressionistic, but, wherever relevant, attention will be paid to the development of the text in individual passages. Since so much remains elusive of the textual trajectory of the Talmudim and Midrashim,

²Some translations may also have been made on the fly or on the spot; a possible double example is found in b. Zev. 54a.

³However, we do have the collation of texts in the Saul Lieberman Talmud Data Bank of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and as for seder Nashim critical editions; see J. Hutner, *תלמוד בבלי* (Jerusalem: Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1972—).

generalizations are best avoided in favour of a case-by-case analysis of individual traditions.

This chapter will neither attempt a comprehensive and rigorous description of rabbinic hermeneutic procedures nor an analysis of the oldest text of any attested translation, regardless of the era in which sages lived who quote a translation resembling one still extant today. The main interest of the analysis provided here is in the perception and import of marked scriptural translations, whether or not their attribution, if any, has been fictionalized; to an extent, such fiction is the source material for history here.⁴ The questions I will seek to answer include the following: are translations on a par with other sources of authority in halakhic debate? How often do the sages turn to translations, which translations, and of which source texts? Are these translations pivotal in the debate, whether the argument is accepted or refuted, or are they peripheral to the line of reasoning? To what extent can they be identified as scribal sprinklings of supplemental knowledge which have been added to an extant *sugya* in the sole interest of learning? To facilitate the discussion of the purport of scriptural translations when cited in a given talmudic or midrashic context and the way these citations have been perceived, I quote the sources at some length, grouped by the format of their appearance in the sources, frequently with references to variant readings, and accompanied by a translation into English. These close readings form the core of this chapter (sections 8.2–6), with the quotations identified as Palestinian Targum meriting a separate discussion in section 8.7. All of these discussions will be necessarily rich in detail to warrant the conclusions drawn from them. But first I will comment more generally on the relationship between source texts and formats, on the structure of quotations and finally on their distribution over the classical rabbinic sources. The last section, 8.8, will provide an overview of the achieved results.

8.1 Structure, formats and distribution

The vast majority of explicit quotations of translations is postpositive: they immediately follow the quotation of the Hebrew source text which

⁴In this context, I obviously do not assume that the rabbinic portrayals of Rav Yoseph or Aquila/Onqelos provide us with source material for a historical biography.

they interpret. The usual sequence is: lemma (Hebrew source text) + the verb 'translate' + translation. Wherever the verb 'translate' precedes the source text (prepositive), which only occurs twice,⁵ or comes without one (negative), which is likewise relatively rare,⁶ there is reason to assume that the quotation is an interpretation that happens to involve another language rather than a translation.⁷

Inevitably, there is shared ground between interpretation and translation and any differentiation between them will be attempted only to make the appropriate inferences about language selection and the status and functions of contemporary translations—but by the same token, to reveal the particularly close relationship between lexical clarifications and language, in a form of code-switching, wherever the distinction between translation and interpretation is nigh impossible to make. Many of the 'quoted translations' in rabbinic literature evolve from hermeneutics on the spot, an interpretation tailored to the occasion, which involves an element of translation; especially, but not exclusively, in the Bavli, where Aramaic is the language of discourse. Such translations reflect the use of languages other than Hebrew, but not of comprehensive translations (i.e., of a long stretch of text) which consolidated over the course of time. At this juncture the rabbinic taxonomy of language transpires as one factor behind the use of Aramaic, with its differentiation of languages for certain functions within the text—no matter how difficult it is to discern the set rules for these language alternations. When differentiation between comprehensive translations and local interpretations will be attempted in this chapter, it is not to deny the translational aspects of interpretations in native speech, usually Aramaic, but in some lexical instances, Greek, or to deny that translation from one language into another always involves interpretation, but to achieve a better understanding of the way languages and translations are actually put to use in rabbinic literature. For one thing, it is a truism for many rabbis to employ Aramaic in their interpretative statements while ignoring the Aramaic versions of their time.

⁵b. A. Zar. 44a; Lev. R. 33.6.

⁶y. Kil. 8.6(5), 31c; y. Qid. 1.1, 59a; b. Shab. 28a; b. Sot. 48b ; b. Ned. 38b; b. Naz. 39a; b. San. 103b; b. Zev. 54a; b. Hül. 80a.

⁷For a useful discussion of the definition of a quotation, see Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, pp. 142–53.

Just as the structure of the translations in quotation is helpful for the distinction between localized interpretation and sustained translation, and the different ways the rabbis used either of these, so is the format of the quotations for analyzing the way they were used. The translations occur in the following formats of introduction: (1) 'as Rav Yoseph translates'; (2) 'as we translate'; (3) 'Aquila translated'; (4) 'here they interpret'; (5) quotations which are simply marked as a translation, with attribution; (6) quotations which are simply marked as a translation without attribution, and finally, (7) scriptural translations which are not explicitly marked as a translation. The last category includes translations introduced by: 'Rabbi X said', or lists like 'a, b, c; a means x, b means y, c means z'. This category contains a large number of implicit citations of contemporaneous translations which are no longer extant, but predominantly translations made on-the-fly, most of which have been identified by Goshen-Gottstein in the volumes *Fragments of Lost Targumim*.⁸ A priori fragments to be dated in the Islamic period or after are too late to be included here as the medieval period would steer this study into entirely new waters.

The distribution of the quotations and their formats are informative. In nineteen instances Rav Yoseph is quoted with a translation: three for the Tora, fourteen for the Prophets and two for the Writings.⁹ The two citations from a Targum to the Writings are pseudepigraphic, as I will show below, whereas the three quoted translations from the Tora are received wisdom under the banner 'as we translate...'. Conversely, the distribution of the quotations marked 'as we translate' features eighteen quoted translations of the Tora in the Bavli,¹⁰ including those three quoted indirectly by Rav Yoseph, and eighteen further instances in Amoraic Midrashim,¹¹ in

⁸ M. Goshen-Gottstein, *שקיעים מתרגומי המקרא הארמיים* (2 vols.; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983–1989).

⁹ Tora: b. Shab. 28a; 64a; b. Naz. 39a. Prophets: b. Ber. 28a; b. Pes. 68a; b. Yom. 32b; 77b; b. Meg. 3a; b. M. Qat. 26a; 28b; b. Ned. 38a; b. Qid. 13a; 72b; b. B. Qam. 3b; b. San. 94b; b. A. Zar. 44a; b. Men. 110a. Writings: b. Naz. 3a; b. Sot. 48b.

¹⁰ b. Shab. 10b; 28a (Rav Yoseph); 64a (Rav Yoseph); b. R. Hash. 33b; b. Meg. 10b; b. M. Qat. 2a (2x); b. Naz. 39a (Rav Yoseph); b. Git. 68b; b. B. Qam. 38a; 116b; b. B. Bat. 12b; b. San. 106b; b. Hül. 80a; 139b; b. Bek. 50a; b. Arak. 15b; b. Nid. 31b.

¹¹ Pes. K. 2.6; 26.9; Tan. and TanB. אחריו מות 5; Lam. R. 3.1.1 (Exod. 14.7); 3.1.1/3.10.4 (Deut. 29.9); Gen. R. 43.9; 8.1; Num. R. 9.44; 10.9; 13.14; Midr. Pss. 18.7; 18.32; 18.34; 48.5; 76.3; 81.7; 110.5; Exod. R. 3.13.

contrast to two quotations for the Prophets in the Bavli,¹² a further six in the Midrashim,¹³ and finally three for the Writings, all in Midr. Psalms.¹⁴ There are more instances of Aramaic translations of (rarely more than) a few words of the Prophets, but these are not singled out as ‘targum’, hence unmarked. This picture is, in fact, even more blurred, since all the citations in Amoraic Midrashim are by default later supplements to the text, not because of the Targum cited, but because the Babylonian formula ‘as we translate’ (מתרגמינן) on its own suffices to signal a later hand in Palestinian midrashim: enclitic pronouns on participles do not occur in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic unless ‘borrowed’ from the East. While borrowing is theoretically possible at the stage of composition, manuscript variation in at least some instances suggests the inclusion is secondary in the early or classical Midrashim. There is reason to assume that things are different later, but the later period is not under consideration in this study.

If we take note of these scribal instances, as in Table 8.1, we see the beginnings of an odd pattern: with a single exception, all quotations from Targum Jonathan or a Targum to the Prophets hail from Rav Yoseph but all quotations marked ‘as we translate’ concern Targum Onqelos. The two

	Tora	Prophets	Writings
Rav Yoseph translates	0	14	3 (0)
As we translate	18	3 (1)	0
Aquila translated	3	4	6

Table 8.1: The distribution of quotations over source texts

exceptions, as I will argue below, include a gloss in b. R. Hash. 22b which is not supported by the majority of manuscripts. What is not readily visible in any tables is the tendency in the Yerushalmi and early Midrashim to quote translations without a formal marker other than ‘PN says/said’, with the sole exception of Aquila—which is yet another confirmation of the distinction in terminology between the Yerushalmi and the Bavli. But if

¹²b. R. Hash. 22b; b. M. Qat. 2a.

¹³Gen. R. 1.1; Abba Gurion 1.3; TanB. בראשית 6; Num. R. 14.1; Midr. Pss. 56.2; 60.2. For the purpose of investigation I included later Midrashim such as Numbers Rabba and Midrash Psalms, which feature a number of scriptural translations in quotation.

¹⁴Midr. Pss. 77.1; 78.9; 78.12.

we tentatively count the quotations in the Yerushalmi, apart from Aquila, we find that they are all unmarked unless they are marked for criticism, and they concern mainly verses, or more precisely words, from the Tora and the Prophets, less frequently the Writings.

Rav Yoseph and the anonymous 'we' who 'translate' also differ in their use of the quotations. Details will follow in the close readings below, but in short, each of Rav Yoseph's translations is dispensable within the talmudic discourse, an inconsequential aside, or a peripheral afterthought to the main line of reasoning. This is not the case with all the instances brought up 'as we translate', as quite a few of them are deeper embedded in the discursive structure of the sources citing them, although a substantial number could still easily be detached from the sugyot without affecting their train of thought. The implication of these observations are as follows: during the early stages the extant translations were used for the light they shed on the lexical meaning of Hebrew words, but not as a source of any further authority. At a later stage, quotations were held in higher esteem, and seen to reinforce the argument, hence added to pre-existing discourses.

What then to make of those translations that are cited by named sages under the marker 'as we translate'? The results were unexpectedly interesting here. Of the twenty-one instances in the Bavli, about thirteen have been ascribed to a named rabbi ('about' because it is sometimes difficult to demarcate direct speech and glossed discourse confidently), while eight are raised by the anonymous voice. The later instances tend to be in the nature of a hanger-on or also-said, without consequence for the debate or the argument, which could be detached from the discussion without any further ado. Conversely, those citations ascribed to named sages import valuable lexical or semantic information to the discussion, and are therefore indispensable, most notably in the three cases where the way 'we translate' has been raised as an argument by no one less but Rav Yoseph. The distinction between named and anonymous translations is significant enough to warrant a subdivision below.

By the same token, the citations of an Aramaic version of the Prophets—which is not identical to TgJon in three instances—by Rav Yoseph is less informative than his three citations of the way 'we translate' the Tora. The Rav Yoseph translations are invariably cited indirectly, that is, the formula is not 'Rav Yoseph translates' but 'in agreement with how Rav Yoseph

translates'. All of these have been cited by the anonymous narrator with the sole exception of the three instances (concerning two verses) where Rav Yoseph exclaims that 'were it not for the *targum* of this verse, I would not know its meaning'. The dispensable character of these instances thus compares well to those of the 'as we translate' translations.

Once 'as Rav Yoseph translates' and 'as we translate' go together (b. A. Zar. 44a). All these quotations and those ascribed to Rav Yoseph are formulated in the present tense, indicating that the translation was carried over, orally, into the rabbinic discourse. By the same token, the present tense suggests a traditional status, 'this is how we do it', as an oral 'textus receptus'. Conversely, the translation ascribed to Aquila is invariably referred to as past activity, 'Aquila translated'. The past tense may relate to the written character of Aquila's version, using Palestinian terminology (see Chapter Four), as opposed to the predominant oral mode of transmission for the Aramaic versions. But it may also reflect the different use of Aquila's version, which, by the time Palestinian rabbinic circles cited it, had already been established as one of the sources of knowledge, even though it may not have been in active use to the same extent as (we assume it was) in the Byzantine Diaspora.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The core of this chapter thus consists of detailed case readings.

8.2 As Rav Yoseph translates

Rav Yoseph was one of the famous Babylonian scholars in the fourth century CE, who headed the rabbinic academy at Pumbeditha and has been credited with many Aramaic quotations. Because he was reportedly blind¹⁵—and accordingly allowed to translate from memory, but not to recite Scripture¹⁶—his involvement with the oral tradition of scriptural translation would not come as a surprise. Said quotations gave rise to the speculation that Rav Yoseph composed the Targum to the Prophets, or was at least responsible for its redaction (thought to have been carried out in Babylonia).¹⁷ This hypothesis is now generally abandoned: (1) The

¹⁵ See b. Qid. 31a; b. Pes. 111b; cf. b. Ned. 41a; b. Eruv. 10a.

¹⁶ See m. Meg. 4.6; t. Meg. 3.27; Tan. תולדות 7; cf. b. Git. 60a.

¹⁷ See Hai Gaon in his commentary to Tohoroth, as cited by Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen*, p. 164; Z. Frankel, 'Zu dem Targum der Profeten', *Jahresbericht des jüdisch-*

Bavli does not attribute either activity to Rav Yoseph. (2) Rav Yoseph twice cites a translation preceded by the following words: אמר רב יוסף אלמלא 'Said Rav Yoseph, Were it not for the translation of this verse, I would not know what it says'.¹⁸ (3) Three of his translations do not agree with the current editions of TgJon, which, provided that the lacunary character of these editions does not withhold vital information from us, indicates that he did not finalize its text.¹⁹ (4) Some of his non-translational interpretations disagree with those found in the translation of TgJon.²⁰ For all these reasons the erudite Rav Yoseph is likely to have rehearsed received tradition, for which the circumstance of his blindness made him the most appropriate tradent in the Babylonian rabbinic tradition as far as the Aramaic scriptural translation is concerned.

Given that reputation, and the circumstance that no one else cites Targum quite like him, it is far from inconceivable that some attributions occurred retrospectively. We should bear in mind that the traditions scrutinized below are not directly articulated by Rav Yoseph as a partner in the discussion—that would have required 'Rav Yoseph translated' or 'Rav Yoseph said, We translate'—but by someone who remains anonymous and verbalizes his translation to comment on the discussion: 'as Rav Yoseph translates'. The way his translations are introduced mark Rav Yoseph as a source of knowledge rather than someone who addresses a contemporary rabbi.²¹

On the evidence of the quotations, Rav Yoseph was primarily an expert in the Targum to the Latter Prophets, quoted fourteen times with reference to thirteen different passages (Zech. 12.11 has been quoted twice), and among these he refers to the Former Prophets only once. Below I will discuss some salient examples in close detail to ascertain their impact on the talmudic discourse, followed by an evaluation of his acknowledgement that TgJon existed before his time, some evidence that Rav Yoseph did not always agree or follow interpretations espoused by TgJon, and finally his

theologischen Seminars "Fraenkel'scher Stiftung" (Breslau: F.W. Jungfer's Buchdruckerei, 1872), pp. 1–48 (10–12); W. Bacher, 'Kritische Untersuchungen zum Prophetentargum', ZDMG 28 (1874), pp. 1–72 (56). Contrast Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, pp. 9–16.

¹⁸The phrase occurs three times, but one citation is repeated; b. Meg. 3a (par. b. M. Qat. 28b); b. San. 94b.

¹⁹b. Qid. 72b on Zech. 9.6; Ber. 28a on Zeph. 3.18. See below for a discussion.

²⁰See Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, pp. 14–15 n. 12.

²¹Cf. Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors*, p. 145.

two alleged citations of Targum Writings, which I will eliminate from the record as his.

The import of translation: Rav Yoseph ≠ TgJon

To deny the composition of Targum Jonathan to Rav Yoseph, Churgin fleetingly pointed to instances where Rav Yoseph either quotes an extant translation or offers a Tannaitic tradition which differs from TgJon.²² Below I will discuss the importance of Rav Yoseph's translation for the line of thought in the Bavli, in those cases where Rav Yoseph's translation crucially differs from TgJon's wording. In the section hereafter the function of the translation will be analysed in those instances where Rav Yoseph's translation virtually agrees with that offered by TgJon.

b. Ber. 28a

The *gemara* discusses the appropriate times of the morning, afternoon and evening prayers and their unjustified delay, following m. Ber. 4.1, including the *musaf*, that is additional prayer on Shabbat morning. Having discussed the first three in detail, b. Ber. 28a addresses when any delay in praying the *musaf* becomes unacceptable. The anonymous opinion in the *mishna* sets the timing of the *musaf* to 'the whole day', but R. Yehuda maintains that it can only be said 'until the seventh hour'.

In this connection the *gemara* recalls what R. Yehoshua b. Levi and R. Eleazar taught about those who say the *musaf*- and morning prayer late, with both citing R. Yehuda's reference to Zeph. 3.18. To illustrate what R. Yehuda meant by his reference, which is not self-evident, the anonymous voice applies Rav Yoseph's translation of Zeph. 3.18 to the topic of late prayer. The phrase נגיי ממערב in this verse was understood in Rav Yoseph's translation as aiming at people who delayed the times of the festivals. This understanding of Zeph. 3.18 is brought to bear upon the delay in praying the statutory *musaf*-prayer, which is all the more intriguing because its wording departs significantly from the version found in TgJon to Zeph. 3.18. The relevant passage reads as follows (after edn Son1483), with my translation of Zeph. 3.18 tailored to the arguments in the talmudic debate:

²² Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, pp. 14–15, 147–49: b. Shab. 26a (Jer. 52.16); 56a / b. Ket. 6b(1 Sam. 17.18); b. Yom. 10a (Gen. 10.2). For b. A. Zar. 44a, see my discussion above. His reference to b. Shab. 54b is a mistake. For b. Yom. 10a, see also Gen. R. 37.1 and y. Meg. 1.11[8], 71b.

אר' יהושע בן לוי²³ כל המתפלל תפלה של מוספין לאחר שבע שעות לר' יהודה' עליו הכתוב אומ' נוג' ממועד אספתי ממך מאי משמע²⁴ דהאי נוגי לישנא דתברא הוא' כדמת[ר]גם רב יוסף תבר²⁵ אתי²⁶ על שנאיהון דבית ישראל על דאחר²⁷ זמני מועדי דבירושלם אר' אלעזר²⁸ כל המתפלל תפלה של שחרית לאחר ארבע שעות לר' יהודה עליו הכתוב אומ' נוגי ממועד אספתי ממך מאי משמע²⁹ דהאי נוגי לשנא דצער' הוא דכתיב דלפה נפשי³⁰ מתוגה רב נחמן בר יצחק אמ' ³¹ מהכא בתולותיה נוגות והיא מר לה

Said R. Yehoshua b. Levi, Whoever says the musaf prayer after the seventh hour [of the day],³² according to R. Yehuda³³ Scripture says of him, 'I will gather them that are broken because of the appointed time, who are among you' (Zeph. 3.18).

What indicates that this [word] נוגי is an expression of calamity? As Rav Yoseph translated [this verse], 'Calamity [upon calamity] will come upon the enemies of the house of Israel, because they delayed the times of the appointed times [= festivals or prayers] in Jerusalem'.

Said R. Eleazar, Whoever says the morning prayer after the fourth hour [of the day], according to R. Yehuda Scripture says of him, 'I will gather them that are afflicted because of the appointed time, who are among you' (Zeph. 3.18).

What indicates that this [word] נוגי is an expression of sorrow? As it is written,

²³אר' יהושע בן לוי: so Son1483, Mun95 and Vilna. Ox23, H671 read אר' אלעזר and finally, Flor reads בן לוי יהושע בן לוי אמ' אמ' אלעז' אמ' ר' יהושע בן לוי. Since R. Eleazar lived long before R. Yehoshua b. Levi, the reading of Flor must be due to conflation of the two previous readings, one of which was probably found in the margin of Flor's (or its ancestor's) exemplar, mistaken for a correction, and copied into the text.

²⁴Mun95 and H671 support Flor with the short clause מאי משמע, but Ox23, Son1483 and Vilna read דהאי נוגי לישנא דתברא הוא, while a marginal supplement in Flor reads דהאי נוגי ממועד לישנא דתברא הוא.

²⁵Mun95, Ox23, Flor and H671 all read תברא על תברא for תברא in Vilna and Son1483 (cf. TgJon Jer. 4.20). The manuscripts are supported by Shek. T. Gen. 42.38 and Yalq. S. §567, as noted by Goshen-Gottstein, המקרא מתרגומי המקרא, I, pp. 84–85.

²⁶Ox23 and Flor read אייתי; Mun95 דאתי; H671 אותו; Vilna supports Son1483.

²⁷Mun95 and Flor erroneously read דאחרו.

²⁸Cf. n. 23 above. The reading with R. Eleazar is supported by Son1483 and Mun95; R. Yehoshua b. Levi is supported by Ox23, Flor, H671 and Vilna.

²⁹The passage that follows, הוא דכתיב דלפה נפשי מתוגה, is not attested in Mun95, Ox23 and H671, but supported by Flor, Son1483 and Vilna.

³⁰Flor erroneously reads עיני instead of נפשי, perhaps because the scribe thought of the verb as 'dripping', as in Job 16.20 (דלפה עיני) or b. Bek. 44a (דולפות ... עיני).

³¹This statement comes after Rav Yoseph and before R. Eleazar in Ox23.

³²Lit. 'after seven hours', by which is meant the 7/12th part of daytime.

³³H671 has at this point the plus ודי חובתו לא יצא ידי חובתו 'he did not fulfil his obligation'.

‘My soul is racked with grief’ (Ps. 119.28).

Rav Naḥman b. Yiṣḥaq said, [We derive it] from here, ‘Her girls grieve and her lot is bitter’ (Lam. 1.4).

It is important to note that Zeph. 3.18 is applied twice to those who are late in saying their prayers—the *musaf* prayer in the case of R. Yehoshua b. Levi, the morning prayer in case of R. Eleazar—while the order of these two opinions is not a given. It may seem self-evident enough that the block should start with R. Yehoshua b. Levi because he is the very link to the preceding incident (with a student who could not remember who had taught what), but important witnesses begin this unit with R. Eleazar, and if R. Yehoshua b. Levi occurs in the second position, there would be nothing unusual in such a resumption (see Table 8.2 below).³⁴ In all witnesses, R. Eleazar speaks about the *musaf* while R. Yehoshua b. Levi speaks about the morning prayer,³⁵ but that is about where the stability of the text ends. As Table 8.2 demonstrates, the order of the two units (R. Eleazar and R. Yehoshua b. Levi) varies, and the citation of Rav Yoseph’s translation is evenly divided over both rabbis in the textual witnesses. On top of that, the order, presence and wording of the meta-textual comments varies, as does the position of R. Naḥman ben Yiṣḥaq’s statement.³⁶ Even apart from additional differences in wording, this summary suffices to show that none of the six witnesses share the same sequence and number of components except, as expected, the two editions, all of which adds up to a highly instable picture with ramifications for our understanding of the way Rav Yoseph’s translation has been applied here.

The phrase נוגי ממועד in Zeph. 3.18 is notoriously difficult to interpret, as demonstrated by the wide variation in modern Bible translations; the Bavli quoted above provides us with no less than three interpretations of the key word נוגי: ‘calamity’, ‘delay’, and ‘sorrow’.³⁷ The first meaning is

³⁴ See n. 23 above. Flor conflates the ascriptions in the first position.

³⁵ Which strengthen the assumption of conflation in Flor, see n. 23 above.

³⁶ See Table 8.2. Since מהכא introduces another source for the same interpretation but does not introduce a different point or objection, Rav Naḥman’s citation probably should follow the quotation of Ps. 119.28 which aligns with his source.

³⁷ Note that previous studies, more concerned with TgJon than the Bavli, only recognized the first two interpretations: Gordon, *Studies in the Targum*, pp. 49–52, Goshen-Gottstein, *המקרא מתרגומי*, 1, p. 85 and Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, p. 198.

Witness	Name	Prayer	Exp	RY	Exp	Name	Prayer	Exp	Ps	RY	Exp
Mun95	YbL	musaf	—	—	—	El	morning	—	—	yes	Naḥ
Ox23	El	morning	תברא	yes	Naḥ	YbL	musaf	—	—	—	—
Flor	El+YbL	morning	— ³⁸	yes	—	YbL	musaf	צער	Ps	—	Naḥ
H671	El	morning	—	—	—	YbL	musaf	—	—	yes	Naḥ
Son1483	YbL	musaf	תברא	yes	—	El	morning	צער	Ps	—	Naḥ
Vilna	YbL	musaf	תברא	yes	—	El	morning	צער	Ps	—	Naḥ

Table 8.2: The floating units of b. Ber. 28a³⁹

found in Rav Yoseph's translation תברא על תברא 'calamity upon calamity' which represents MT's נוגי with the repetition expressing the plural ending of נוגי, at least in the four manuscripts (the editions only read תברא). The verb תבר 'break, shatter' is the equivalent of the Hebrew verb נגה in TgLam. 1.5, 12 and 3.32, 33,⁴⁰ which agrees with LXX's translation of Zeph. 3.18, τὸς σπνττετριμμένους 'those who are broken'.

The second meaning, 'delay', makes Rav Yoseph's translation relevant for the topic of prayer times, although curiously this interpretative take on Zeph. 3.18 receives no comment or explanation and never becomes explicit in the discourse, but is implicit in the translation: 'they delayed the times of the appointed times' (דאוחרו זימני מועדיא). This last understanding is crucial, as it is brought to bear upon the delay in praying the statutory musaf tefilla. The element of 'delay' in Rav Yoseph's translation makes Zeph. 3.18 so eminently suitable for R. Yehuda's criticism and places the Aramaic translation right at the heart of the unit. The translation דאוחרו is derived from the meaning which the verb נגה has in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, 'be late', a verb used in connection with prayer in b. Shab. 10a: נגה לצלויי 'it was getting late for prayer' (explained as a delay by Rashi).⁴¹ Once more,

³⁸ A second hand added a reference to דתברא in the margin; this correction is misread as דצער on Version 5 of the Sol and Evelyn Henkind Talmud Text Databank.

³⁹ Abbreviations: YbL = R. Yehoshua b. Levi; El = R. Eleazar; Exp = explanation (citation); תברא = 'It is an expression of calamity'; RY = 'As Rav Yoseph translates'; Naḥ = 'Rav Naḥman b. Yishāq said'; צער = 'It is an expression of sorrow'; Ps = citation Ps. 119.28.

⁴⁰ Goshen-Gottstein, מדרגות המקרא, 1, p. 85 n. 6.

⁴¹ Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 728; A. Ho, *The Targum of Zephaniah: Manuscripts and Commentary* (SAIS, 7; Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 395; Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, p. 197. Note that much depends on the etymology of the verb; if related to נגה #2 (denied by Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 728) it would not have been out of place in Roman Palestine.

Biblical Hebrew is read as if it were another language on the assumption that all languages are a family.

If the first two interpretations are expressed in Rav Yoseph's translation of נוגי, the third relates נוגי to *nugot* ('grieving') in Lam. 1.4 and *mittuga* ('from grief') in Ps. 119.28. The question mirrors the third interpretation: 'What is the meaning of this [phrase] *nugei*? It is an expression of sorrow...' The equivalents in the ancient translations suggest that the fields of 'grief, sorrow' and 'break, shatter' are both relevant here⁴²—the element of 'delay' in Rav Yoseph (and TgJon) is unique.

That Rav Yoseph's translation is simultaneously central and peripheral for the flow of the discussion assumes greater importance when we take stock of inner-talmudic variant readings, in which his comments float between R. Yehoshua b. Levi and R. Eleazar. Such variation suggests late scribal activity, which also accounts for the floating of the meta-comments. The translation, whatever the timing of its composition, is a late addition to this particular discourse. It is perhaps no coincidence that the two meta-comments focus on the two equivalents of 'calamity' and 'affliction' rather than 'delay', even if these comments are not attested in all witnesses and could easily be taken for late amplifications of the discursive structure. Since Rav Yoseph's translation with 'delay' is based on Babylonian Aramaic, the Palestinian R. Yehuda was probably thinking in terms of 'calamity' or 'affliction', hence along the lines of one of the meta-comments. On this assumption, Rav Yoseph's comment—as cited by an anonymous contributor—was not endemic to the argument but enhances it by realizing the unfulfilled potential of Zeph. 3.18. All this is perfectly normal within rabbinic discourse, but has ramifications for the date of the translation as well as the rabbinic use of translations.

Rav Yoseph's translation achieves two things: it establishes the lexical meaning of 'calamity', and it justifies the connection with the topic of late prayer, if such was needed, by its translation of 'delay'. Thus the import of lexical precision and, perhaps secondarily of topical suitability, characterize the resort to *targum* in b. Ber. 28a. That Rav Yoseph's translation, or TgJon for that matter, does not explicitly address the statutory *musaf* prayer but speaks of interference with the timing of religious festivals in Jerusalem

⁴² Note that TgLam 1.4 has the equivalent מבל 'mourn', while TgJon Isa. 51.23 renders מניגין 'your tormentors' with מנין לך 'who were oppressing you'. TgJon 19.2 reflects תגיון 'grieve' with תקנטון 'vex'. Cf. TgJon 2 Sam. 20.13.

goes ignored. There is an analogy of sorts between the delay of festival times and that of prayer, since the prayer mirrors the statutory sacrifices in the temple service and מועד may apply to either *musaf* or festival, but differences remain: one text is about *weekly* prayer, the other about *seasonal* festivals.

As has often been observed, Rav Yoseph's translation differs significantly from TgJon in its wording, although hardly in its sentiment. Overall, however, the differences prompt the question of priority and dating of either version. The talmudic version reads as follows (according to Flor with the longer reading):

תברא על תברא אייתי על שנאיהון דבית ישראל על דאחרו זימני מועדיא דבירושלם
I will bring calamity upon calamity upon the enemies of the house of Israel,
because they delayed the times of the festivals in Jerusalem.

Note that in this reading of Flor, supported by Ox23, the main verb is in the first person, 'I will bring', which aligns well with the first person in the Hebrew text ('I will gather from you') and also actuates the threat of punishment; the editions read that 'calamity will come'. TgJon's version is:

דהו מעכבין ביד זמני מועדיך ארחיקית מגויד וי עליהון על דהו נטלין זינהון לקבלך
ומחסדין לך
Those among you who delayed the times of your festivals I have removed
from your midst.⁴³ Woe is them, for they took up their arms against you and
reviled you.

It is not exactly clear to whom the Targum refers here as the enemy, and such oblique references to historical situations, which are common in TgJon, may well be deliberate in their openness to multiple interpretations. Nonetheless, an external enemy is more likely than an internal group of dissenters or disobedient fellows.⁴⁴ Conversely, Rav Yoseph's translation appears to address people within the community of Israel, those who do not pray the *musaf* prayer in due course—or the morning prayer, depending on whether Rav Yoseph's translation follows R. Yehoshua b. Levi's statement or that of R. Eleazar; see Table 8.2 above. On the other hand, this address in connection with the prayer times is secondary and the talmudic focus is lexical rather than narrative. In other words, the translation Rav Yoseph

⁴³The verb ארחיקית is in the past (so Gordon, *Studies in the Targum*, p. 50 n. 46, against Goshen-Gottstein, *שקיעים מתרגומי המקרא*, I, p. 85).

⁴⁴See Gordon, *Studies in the Targum*, pp. 49–52.

cites may also have been levelled at an external foe before its incorporation into the discussion of the *musaf* or morning prayer.

The differences are such that the translations have too little in common to assume a common origin in a single translation, despite reminiscences. TgJon does not refer to any 'calamity' which will be 'brought' against 'the enemies of the House of Israel'. It speaks of people who delayed 'among you' and who God has 'removed from you'. And while there is a common motif of delay, TgJon's choice of words differs: דהו מעכבין, which may also be understood in terms of 'cessation, hindrance', instead of talmudic דאחרר.⁴⁵ Both refer to the 'times' of the 'festivals', but the Talmud adds that these were held in Jerusalem. The motif of interference with the festival times is similar (based on the source text's מועד), the wording is not. There is no reason to assume that these two translations are textual variations of one another, rather than to assume a different origin for both, with recourse to a similar exegetical tradition that applied MT's נוגי ממועד to those interfering with the festival times. Calendrical disputes existed at the end of the Second Temple Period and resurfaced with the Karaites.

There has been rife speculation that Rav Yoseph's translation antedates TgJon to Zeph. 3.18,⁴⁶ but the evidence is tenuous. The main arguments rest on the assumption that TgJon may have been revised in the late Amoraic period,⁴⁷ whereas the talmudic version was attributed to either late Tannaim or early Amoraim, as Rav Yoseph, R. Yehuda and R. Yehoshua b. Levi lived in the second and third century CE. While the latter two rabbis must have understood נוגי ממועד as interference with the prayer times at festivals, it does not follow that they arrived at this conclusion by way of Rav Yoseph's Aramaic translation. In fact, they probably did not: his translation has been quoted to shed light on and confirm their conclusions of being 'broken' or 'afflicted', not to establish the component of delay. The

⁴⁵For the Hebrew equivalents of עכב in the *paël*, see J.C. de Moor et al. (eds.), *A Bilingual Concordance to the Targum of the Prophets* (21 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1996–2005), *passim*. The verb does not necessarily mean 'delay', but in combination with the 'times' of the festivals that meaning is the most likely one.

⁴⁶Frankel, 'Zu dem Targum', p. 40; Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, pp. 14 n. 12, 148; Goshen-Gottstein, *מדרגות התורה*, 1, pp. 84–85; Gordon, *Studies in the Targum*, pp. 49–52; M.A. Sweeney, *Zephaniah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), p. 34; Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, pp. 196–98. Contrast Ho, *Targum of Zephaniah*, pp. 394–403.

⁴⁷This argument does not reckon with the probably even later redaction of the Bavli itself.

talmudic double translation appears to be an oral transmutation of extant exegetical traditions, possibly but not necessarily with recourse to TgJon, and above all a translation tailored to its own talmudic co-text. Even so, the mere citation of Zeph. 3.18 sufficed in both units, as the various positions of Rav Yoseph's translation confirm. All this makes it improbable that the talmudic version is older than TgJon; to wit, the talmudic version is an ad-hoc translation which entered the tradition at a relatively late stage—although hitting the target as if it had always been assumed in place.

b. Qid. 72b

In b. Qid. 72b Rav Yoseph's translation differs from TgJon in ways more crucial than have hitherto been observed, even when the differences were noted. Perhaps understandably so, because at first sight Rav Yoseph's translation of Zech. 9.6 quoted here diverges so slightly from TgJon that it would be easy to consider the two as substantially identical, as has been so often done.⁴⁸ If two versions agree by and large, and the agreement is not due to the underlying source text (or more accurately, it would be easy to envisage slightly different wordings had these versions been independent from one another), minor variations may be accounted for by the history of textual transmission of TgJon. But here we have a very different scenario, because the differences take on greater significance when we take the talmudic context into account. Starting on f. 70a, the Bavli discusses the issue of *mamzerim*, 'bastards', and includes on f. 72b a *baraita* on the future purification of *mamzerim* (and *netinim*, Temple slaves who were considered as if *mamzerim*)⁴⁹ according to R. Yose, a view with which R. Meir disagrees:

⁴⁸W. Bacher, 'Notes on the Critique of the Text of the Targum of the Prophets', JQR 11 (1899), pp. 651–55 (655); K.J. Cathcart and R.P. Gordon, *The Targum to the Minor Prophets* (AB, 14; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), p. 204; cf. R.P. Gordon, 'Terra Sancta and the Territorial doctrine of the Targum to the Prophets', in J.A. Emerton and S.C. Reif (eds.), *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honor of E.I.J. Rosenthal* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 119–31 (129). Churgin (*Targum Jonathan*, p. 148) observed that these versions were different, without providing any further explanation, while Houtman and Sysling (*Alternative Targum Traditions*, pp. 198–200) note the differences in reading without recognizing the differences of interpretation.

⁴⁹Vermes et al. (eds.), *Schürer: The History*, 11, pp. 290–91; B.A. Levine, 'Gibeonites and Nethinim', EJ 7, cols. 552–54; B.A. Levine, 'Later Sources on the Netinim', in H.A. Hoffner, Jr (ed.), *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to C.H. Gordon* (AOAT, 22; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), pp. 101–107.

ת"ר ממזירי ונתיני טהורים לעתיד לבא דברי ר' יוסי ר' מאיר אומר אין⁵⁰ טהורים אמר לו⁵¹ ר' יוסי והלא כבר נאמר וזרקתי עליכם⁵³ מים טהורים וטהרתם אמר לו ר' מאיר כשהוא אומר מכל טומאותיכם ומכל גלולים⁵⁴ ולא מן הממזרות אמר לו ר' יוסי⁵⁵ כשהוא אומר⁵⁶ אטהר אתכם הוי אומר⁵⁷ אף מן הממזרות בשלמא לרבי מאיר היינו דכתיב וישב ממזר באשדוד אלא לר' יוסי מאי וישב ממזר באשדוד⁵⁸ כדמתרגם רב יוסף יתבון⁵⁹ בית⁶⁰ ישראל לרוחצן בארעהון דהווי⁶¹ דמו⁶² בה לנוכראין אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל הלכה כרבי יוסי אמר רב יוסף⁶³ אי לאו דאמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל הלכה כרבי יוסי⁶⁴ הוה אתי אליהו מפיק⁶⁵ מינן צורני צורני קולרין⁶⁶

Our rabbis taught, mamzerim and netinim will become pure in the future; this is R. Yose's view. R. Meir says, They will not become pure.

Said R. Yose to him, But was it not already stated, 'And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean?' (Ezek. 36.25).

Said R. Meir to him, When it [further] says, 'from all your uncleanness and from all your idols' (Ezek. 36.25), [it implies] but not from bastardy.

Said R. Yose to him, When it [further] says, 'I will cleanse you' (Ezek. 36.25),

⁵⁰Mun95 and VatIII read אין.

⁵¹Ox248 reads Aramaic .לי.

⁵²VatIII has the minus 'ר, corrected in the margin.

⁵³Mun95 shortened the quptation to וגו' וזרקתי עליך.

⁵⁴For מכל גלולים אטהר אתכם, Mun95 reads מכל טומאותיכם ומכל גלולים; Ox248 מכל טומאותיכם אטהר אתכם; VatIII מכל טומאותיכם ומכל גלולים; Guad מכל טומאותיכם אטהר אתכם; Guad מכל טומאותיכם ומכל גלולים.

⁵⁵The second response of R. Yose is missing in Mun95; אמר לו ר' יוסי כשהוא אומר: אטהר אתכם הוי אומר אף מן הממזרות.

⁵⁶VatIII reads כשהוא אומר for והלא כבר נאמר.

⁵⁷is a minus in VatIII. הוי אומר.

⁵⁸is a minus in VatIII, corrected in the margin לר' יוסי מאי וישב ממזר באשדוד (the latter word also missing in Ox248).

⁵⁹Mun95, Guad agree with TgJon in ויתבון for Vilna's יתבון; VatIII indirectly via the typo ויתבון; Ox248 reads יתבין.

⁶⁰Mun95, VatIII agree with TgJon's בני בית in Ox248, Ven, Vilna; Guad דבית.

⁶¹is a minus in VatIII, corrected between the lines. דהווי.

⁶²Mun95 reads דמיין (with the ARUKH); VatIII דמו (or דמן); Ox248 תמן; Guad דמואן.

⁶³Omission due to haplography in Mun95; אמר רב יוסף אי לאו דאמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל הלכה כרבי יוסי.

⁶⁴Guad* only partially corrected in the print by scratching off parts of the final letter but maintaining the first word: כר יוסי, followed by the plus רב.

⁶⁵Mun95, Ox248 and VatIII ומפיק.

⁶⁶The gloss קולרין is not supported by Ox248, Mun95, VatIII, Guad or Ven; Guad offers the plus גואני גואני 'of various kinds' instead. Guad's copy as collated for the Talmud Text Data Bank is lacunary at this point; I collated the more complete incunabula at the British Library (c.50*.b.2).

you must say, From bastardy too.

All well and good for R. Meir, as this is written, 'And the bastard shall dwell in Ashdod' (Zech. 9.6), but for R. Yose, what [would be the meaning of the verse] 'And the bastard shall dwell in Ashdod'? As Rav Yoseph translates, 'The house of Israel shall dwell in security in their land, where they were as foreigners'.

Rav Yehuda said in Shmuel's name, The *halakha* agrees with R. Yose.

Rav Yoseph said, Had not Rav Yehuda ruled in Shmuel's name that the *halakha* is as R. Yose, Eliya would have come and removed from us entire chain gangs.

The argument between R. Yose and R. Meir about the future status of *mamzerim* revolves around Ezek. 36.25. R. Meir holds that *mamzerim* and *netinim* will not become pure, which R. Yose challenges with the promise of purification held out to Israel upon their return from exile according to Ezek. 36.25. R. Meir rejects this interpretation, on the grounds that the verse does not include *mamzerim* but 'uncleanness' and 'idols', but R. Yose is given the final say: since the verse repeats the promise, it must therefore include all of Israel. Indeed, Rav Yehuda and Rav Yoseph declare the *halakha* to follow the view of R. Yose (in contrast, it seems, to the Yerushalmi).⁶⁷

At the end of this unit, Rav Yoseph remarks, somewhat pragmatically if not ironically, that Israel had stood to lose a multitude of its people when each and every person who is technically *mamzer* is to be identified ('Eliya would have come and sent entire chain gangs away from us'). The repetition צוֹרֵנִי צוֹרֵנִי indicates vastness, provided with a gloss (in Vilna alone) in the form of the Latin loanword קולרין which states the same: צוֹרֵנִי is derived via צוארן from צואר 'neck', while collar denotes the 'neck' as well,⁶⁸ more specifically, the collar was a neck chain for prisoners; a suitable metaphor here for the forceful separation between *mamzerim* etc. and the remainder of Israel.

⁶⁷ Whether the Yerushalmi agrees with the Bavli on this point, is not clear: ר' הוּנָא בַּשָּׁם תּוֹסַפְתָּא כַּפְשׁוּטָא, ר' יוֹסֵף אֲמַר אֵין הֵל' כִּר' יוֹסֵי לַעֲתִיד לְבוֹא, VIII, p. 971, and the Geniza variant: ר' הוּנָא בַּשָּׁם תּוֹסַפְתָּא כַּפְשׁוּטָא, ר' יוֹסֵף אֲמַר אֵין הֵל' כִּר' יוֹסֵי לַעֲתִיד לְבוֹא עֲלֻבִין הֵן הַדּוֹרוֹת (Talmud Yerushalmi, col. 1178).

⁶⁸ Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 957 does not explain the first lexeme ('unclear'), whereas he neither discusses nor quotes the second lexeme, קולרין. The word קולרין is also repeated in the quotation of the Arukh. The derivation from צבר in Jastrow, following Levy, WTM, IV, p. 181, inspired possibly by the Arukh: גִּידוּדִיּוֹת חֵיילוֹת 'army troops' (edn Kohut, VII, p. 13), or Rashi: חֲבוּרוֹת חֲבוּרוֹת, is unwarranted; a contextual guess.

In between the declaration of the *halakha* and the discussion of R. Meir and R. Yose, Zech. 9.6 is brought up as a text that would have supported R. Meir's case had he chosen to adduce it as evidence—which he did not, at least not according to the Bavli. Curiously enough, in the Yerushalmi R. Meir opens the discussion with this very verse,⁶⁹ which forms the basis for his view:

ר' מאיר או' אין ממזרין טהורין לעתיד לבוא שנ' וישב ממזר באשדוד מוליכין טינה
אצל טינה וסריות אצל סריות

R. Meir says, Mamzerim will not become pure in the future, as it is said, 'And the mamzer will dwell in Ashdod'. They lead mud to mud and refuse to refuse.

Even in the visionary future the *mamzerim* and *netinim* are compared to mud and refuse. The verse is taken to imply that *mamzerim* will live separately from the rest of Israel, namely in Ashdod, where their unclean status will not change even though they will be gathered from exile to Israel. Ashdod, then, is not favourably depicted here in keeping with its biblical status as a place which Yehoshua did not conquer, possibly implying a reading of ממזר as מעם זר 'those of a foreign people'.⁷⁰ As such, the verse confirms R. Meir's position and challenges R. Yose's view, at least in the Yerushalmi.

The Bavli is closer to the version preserved in the Tosefta; in fact the first paragraph—from 'Our rabbis taught' to 'From *mamzerut* too'—has an almost *verbatim* parallel in t. Qid. 5.4. The Tosefta does not include Zech. 9.6, which is an anonymous interjection in the Bavli. Thus the Bavli backtracks on the course of the discussion to review R. Meir's argument that was related in the Yerushalmi, only to confirm the established conclusion under recourse to Rav Yoseph's Aramaic translation of Zech. 9.6, which is not mentioned in the Yerushalmi. An existing tradition is broken open to include an additional argument, which, at least in this form, must be later.

Rav Yoseph's translation, quoted in the Arukh, is almost identical with TgJon but for a few differences which are, on closer view, essential:

⁶⁹y. Qid. 3.13, 64d; Lev. R. 32.7.

⁷⁰Cf. Rashi on b. Qid. 72b: העם שהיה מנוכר 'the people which were estranged', followed by a reference to Joshua. Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum to the Minor Prophets*, p. 204 n. 10 refer to TgPsJ Deut. 23.3's interpretation of ממזר as מעמי חלונאי 'and who was given among the strange [= profane] nations'. See further Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen*, p. 52.

Mun95 ויתבון בני ישראל לרוחצן בארעהון דהוו דמיין בה לנוכראין
 TgJon ויתבון בית ישראל באשדוד דהוו בה נכראין

The main differences are TgJon's 'in Ashdod' for the talmudic 'in safety in their land', as well as the talmudic plus 'resembling'. The consequences are not negligible. According to TgJon, the House of Israel will dwell in Ashdod where they used to be foreigners; according to Rav Yoseph, the House of Israel will dwell 'in their land' where they 'resembled' foreigners. The talmudic version deliberately extends the domain of Israel's dwelling to the whole country—in contrast to the underlying Hebrew source text—to underpin R. Yose's interpretation that all of Israel will be purified, including *mamzerim*, whereas R. Meir holds that the bastard will live in Ashdod, separately from the rest of Israel. The borders of Israel were viewed in different ways, and it was a subject of discussion whether Ashdod really did belong to Israel.⁷¹

TgJon's version does not agree with R. Yose's view for it confines the prophecy to Ashdod. Neither does TgJon endorse the view of R. Meir because it substitutes the entire House of Israel for the biblical *mamzer*, thus applies the location Ashdod to all Israel and not to a subcategory of *mamzerim*. TgJon takes the Hebrew *mamzer* as a metaphor for the alienation of Israel in Ashdod and does not relate to the talmudic discussion. Instead, it interprets the verse within its own narrative framework, sticking closer to the Hebrew: the once unconquered territory of Ashdod had Israelites appear as strangers, which is to change in the future. Conversely, the talmudic version appropriates the biblical verse for its own topical interest. It may not be wide off the mark to claim that the talmudic version, embedded in an editorial insertion, adapts the Aramaic translation for its own purposes and is, therefore, later than TgJon, if we accept that their semblance postulates a common origin. If so, the editors recognized that TgJon's translation of ממוזר as the House of Israel could be construed as evidence in favour of R. Yose, but only if the restriction to Ashdod, which underpins R. Meir's argument, was removed. There is no compelling reason for the targumist to change 'their land' back to 'Ashdod', as the entire land would be in keeping with its own view of the future.

⁷¹ For the status of Ashdod, see Vermes et al., *Schürer: The History*, II, pp. 108–109.

b. A. Zar. 44a, b. R. Hash. 22b

The use of utensils with symbols that betray their possible use for idolatrous purposes is forbidden, and if they come into someone's possession, they must be disposed of. The question is, how? All agreed that they should be burnt and pulverized, but they disagreed about the method of disposal. May they be thrown to the wind and dropped into any water, or must they be brought to the Dead Sea specifically? According to m. A. Zar. 3.3:

המוצא כלים ועליהם צורת חמה צורת לבנה צורת דרקון ויליכם לים המלח רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר שעל המכבדין אסורים שעל המבזין מתירין רבי יוסי אומר שוחק וזורה לרוח או מטיל לים אמרו לו אף הוא נעשה זבל שנאמר ולא ידבק בידך מאומה מן החרס
He who finds utensils upon which is the figure of the sun, moon, or a dragon, should bring them to the Salt Sea.

Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says, '[Those which are found] on objects of value are prohibited, but [those which are found] on objects of no worth are permitted'.

R. Yose says, One breaks them into pieces and throws the powder to the wind or drops them into the sea. They said to him, [But] thus it is made into manure, as it is said, 'And there will cleave nothing of a devoted thing to your hand' (Deut. 13.18).

The objection to R. Yose claims that the powder is a form of manure. Since manure would constitute a forbidden gain from idolatrous objects, the powder should not be thrown to the wind or dropped into any water. By contrast, bringing it to the Dead Sea is acceptable because its level of salt would prevent any sort of fertilization. In the *gemara* of b. A. Zar. 43b-44a (cf. b. R. Hash. 22b), R. Yose adduces a series of prooftexts to prove his dissenting opinion, all of which are rejected—by restricting them to specific contexts which do not apply generally. Among the texts he adduces is 2 Sam. 5.21:

אמר להם⁷² והלא כבר נאמר⁷³ ויעזבו שם את עצביהם וישאם דוד ואנשיו ומאי משמע דהאי וישאם דוד לישאם דזריו⁷⁴ הוא כדמתרגם⁷⁵ רב יוסף⁷⁶ תזרם ורוח תשאם ומתרגמינן⁷⁷ תזרינן⁷⁸ ורוח תטלטלינן⁷⁹ אמרו לו משם ראייה הרי הוא אומר וישרפו⁸⁰ באש ומדלא כתיב וישרפם וישאם ש"מ וישאם⁸¹ ממש מכל מקום קשו קראי אהדדי

⁷² ר' יוסי ויעזבו is absent in Pes1511; in Mun95 להן א' is followed by the plus אמר להם.

⁷³ Mun95, Pes1511 support Vilna's נאמר כבר נאמר; Rabi15, Hi337 read 'הרי הוא אומר'.

⁷⁴ For Vilna's דזריו, which is supported by Mun95, Rabi15 reads דבדורי, Hi337 דאיבדורי, and Pes1511 דדוריי.

⁷⁵ Hi337 lacks the conjunction 'ומתרג': כד.

He said to them, But has it not been stated, 'And they left their images there, and David and his men carried them away' (2 Sam. 5.21)?

What indicates that the expression, 'David carried away' is an expression for scattering? As Rav Yoseph translates, 'You shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them off' (Isa. 41.16), and we translate, 'You shall winnow them and a wind will move them'!

They replied to him, Can any proof be adduced from this passage? Behold it states, 'And they were burnt with fire' (1 Chron. 14.12), and since it is not written, 'and he burnt them and carried them off', conclude that [the word] 'carried them off' [is to be taken] literally.

Nevertheless the two verses are contradictory!

The discussion revolves around the meaning of וישאם, which 'we' translate as '[the wind] moved them'. But who is translating here? The wording gives the impression that the way 'we translate' originated with Rav Yoseph, but strictly speaking his translation is not given, only his interpretation of 2 Sam. 5.21 by analogy with Isa. 41.16. If Rav Yoseph translates 'as we translate', why does the text not follow the standard expression 'as Rav Yoseph translates' or 'Rav Yoseph said ... as we translate'? Something is amiss as the variant readings also bear out. In MSS H1337, Rab15 and Mun95 the verb ומתרגמין 'as we translate' is missing, so that in these witnesses Rav Yoseph translated, but with an important difference. In H1337, this results in a clean text with a postpositive format, in which the Hebrew source is cited first (דכתי), followed by the translation (רבי יוסף). But correct as it is, it is also an isolated reading as Table 8.3 demonstrates, which does not easily explain how the other readings came about. In fact H1337's reading may have been the result of scribal correction, since Mun95 and Rab15 precede the Hebrew quotation by the words כדמתרג' רבי יוסף. Such a prepositive position of the verb—where the verb תרגם precedes the source text that is to be translated—does not occur anywhere else in

⁷⁶For Vilna's כדמתרגם רבי יוסף, supported by Rab15, Mun95 and Pes1511, H1337 reads דכתי 'as it is written'. See below for a discussion.

⁷⁷The word ומתרגמין is missing in MSS Mun95, H1337 and Rab108.

⁷⁸For Vilna's תורינו, Rab15 and Pes1511 read תדרינו; Mun95 and H1337 read תבדרינו. Note that t12 supports the latter reading with תבדרינו.

⁷⁹Rab15 reads תטלנין for תטלנין, followed by the plus יתהון (the plus supported by H1337).

⁸⁰Preceded by ויאמר דוד in Rab15, Mun95 and H1337 (1 Chron. 14.12).

⁸¹Mun95 and H1337 read וישאם וישאם for וישאם.

Hi337	מאי משמע דהאי וישאם	לישנא דאיבדורי הוא דכתי'
Rab15	מאי משמע דהאי וישאם	לישנא דבדורי
Mun95	מאי משמ' דהאי וישאם	לישנ' דזרוי
Pes151I	ומאי משמע דהאי וישאם דוד	לישנא דדרוי
Vilna	ומאי משמע דהאי וישאם דוד	לישנא דזרוי
Hi337	תזרם ורוח תשאם וג'	ומתרג' רב יוסף תדרינן
Rab15	תזרם ורוח תשאם וסערה תפיץ אותם	תדרינן
Mun95	תזר' ורוח תשא'	תבדרינן
Pes151I	תזרם ורוח תשאם	ומתרגמ' תדרינ'
Vilna	תזרם ורוח תשאם	ומתרגמינן תזרינן
TgJon		תדרינן
Hi337	ורוחא תטלטינן	ועלעולא תבדר יתהון
Rab15	ורוחא תטלינן	ועלעולא תבדר יתהון
Mun95	רוח טלטילינן	
Pes151I	רוח תטלטינן	
Vilna	רוח תטלטינן	
TgJon	ורוחא תטולונן ⁸³	ומימריה כעלעולא לקשא יבדר יתהון

Table 8.3: b. A. Zar. 44a and TgJon

the rabbinic quotations of scriptural translation.⁸² Tellingly, however, it does occur wherever an interpretative, non-translational activity is recorded which, as we have seen, is the usual function of the verb תרגם in the Bavli.

The simplest scenario to explain the vagaries of this text is to assume that Rav Yoseph interpreted (מתרגם) the text as an expression of 'scattering', hence the prepositive use of the verb תרגם. He did not supply a translation, but, either to add to his quotation or because of his legendary involvement with Aramaic, a translation was added to his statement by later tradents (or hands?), accompanied by the expression 'as we translate'. The latter expression was removed in part of the tradition because of its apparent redundancy after יוסף רב כדמתרגם 'as Rav Yoseph interprets'. (Note also that the parallel in y. A. Zar. 3.3, 42d does not include any Aramaic translation, but features all the prooftexts listed in the Bavli for this discourse, although that only proves it is a Babylonian enhancement of the sugya.)

Despite resemblances, the provided translation does not entirely agree with TgJon, as the comparative Table 8.3 illustrates. The first one of these

⁸² Only in Lev. R. 33.6, where the translation is a medieval gloss; see below, p. 385.

⁸³ Note the variant orthography תטילנן in MS t715y; see n. 84.

readings agrees with the Sefardi variant in TgJon, תבדרנון (as quoted in Sperber's edn), but TgJon's Yemenite translation with a form of נטל is closer to MT's נשא than the Bavli's טלטל, which would be unique from TgJon's perspective.⁸⁴ The question is: has the text been adapted deliberately to accommodate R. Yose's inference, by a subtle semantic shift from 'carrying' to 'scattering', in which the latter does not imply careful disposal at a designated spot? Such an accommodation to the talmudic argument would appear to be most likely if any literary dependency must be assumed, since TgJon's statement that the Memra will scatter the nations as a storm scatters chaff, a comparison which is absent in the Talmud which does not know of any Memra in this sense, would be unhelpful in the talmudic context—but essential within the larger targumic framework of Isa. 41.

In contrast to Isa. 41.16, the quotation of 2 Sam. 5.21 is not provided with an Aramaic translation, despite its relevance, because Hebrew וישאם 'carried them off' is translated with ואוקידנון 'and burned them', a rendering based on the parallel in Chronicles.⁸⁵ Arguably, its omission is transparent, because this translation does not agree with any of the positions adopted in the Bavli, or, for that matter, the Yerushalmi. In both Talmuds 1 Chron. 14.12 and 2 Sam. 5.21 stand in contradiction, whereas TgJon harmonizes them to provide a single, unified reading of both which does not fit the talmudic discourse.

All the prooftexts which R. Yose and the rabbis bring up also occur in the parallel in y. A. Zar. 3.3, 42d, but with some differences, most notable concerning the last contradiction between 2 Sam. 5.21's carrying and 1 Chron. 14.12's burning. In the Yerushalmi, R. Yose explains that idols which were molten were carried away, whereas those made out of wood were burned. This argument is dropped in the Bavli. According to the Yerushalmi the rabbis explain the difference between 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles as follows: those which were annulled by the non-Jew Ittai the Gittite were carried off, whereas those he did not annul were burned by fire. In the Bavli, both explanations of R. Yose are absent, as is the final

⁸⁴ See De Moor et al., *A Bilingual Concordance*, XXI, p. 237 (and *passim*). Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, pp. 204–205 erroneously relate TgJon's lexeme to the pael of טל. Sperber's base text (MS t7153) reads תטילנון, a pael of נטל with /e/ rather than /o/; for other examples, see A. Dodi, *אונקלוס דקדוק תרגום* (unpublished PhD thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 1981), p. 290.

⁸⁵ Van Staaldvine-Sulman, *Targum of Samuel*, p. 514.

reference to the rabbis. Here, Rav Huna introduces Ittai the Gittite in a different way: David had planned to burn the objects (so 1 Chronicles) but when Ittai came along he changed his mind (so 2 Samuel).

The issue of burning and carrying also occurs in b. R. Hash. 22b, which is a partial parallel to b. A. Zar. 44a, where the subject matter is the communication of the appearance of the new moon for which beacons were originally lighted. The Hebrew has, בראשונה היו משיאין משואות, which literally means 'At first they would raise columns [of smoke]'. The *gemara* then opens with an anonymous question:

מאי משמע דמשיאין לישנא דיקוד הוא דכתיב וישאם דוד ואנשיו ומתרגמינן ואוקדינן
דוד

What indicates that משיאין is an expression for 'burning'? As it is written, 'David and his men carried them off (וישאם)', and we translate, 'and David [and his men] burnt them'.

This passage does not appear in the vast majority of mss (Bol, Ox23, Mun140, Mun95, Lon400 and Rab108),⁸⁶ and yet there is no reason to assume a haplography in those witnesses. Conversely, there is ample reason to consider the possibility that the quotation of TgJon was not part of this sugya until later tradents thought of adding a helpful piece of knowledge. Literary and exegetical considerations may strengthen the view that this little unit was bolted unto a previous text. There is little connection with the surrounding text apart from a focus on 'lighting beacons'. No rabbis receive any mention by name, and the only rabbis actively involved are the anonymous participants in the dialogue ('What indicates... As it is written... we translate...'). Exegetically, the import of the semantic value 'to light' is unclear, because it is not taken up in the discourse that follows. That the quotation agrees with our extant version of TgJon in contrast to the version in b. A. Zar. 44a, even though the topical interest aligns well with the latter passage, show it to be a late comment drawn from another source to add lexical precision to the word under consideration. The motive for the translation, which bolsters the opinion that David and his men did not carry off the idols, remains far from the *mishna* in question here. Whether one takes a diachronic view of how this text came about or a synchronic view of its structure, the plus reflects an almost antiquarian interest in preserving knowledge by linking it to

⁸⁶The quotation occurs in Rab1608, Pes1511 and Vilna.

relevant pegs in a text. The manuscript evidence, however, suggest textual development of a scribal nature.

To conclude, in both passages the Aramaic quotation represents relatively late textual growth of scribal tradents. Moreover, in b. A. Zar. 44a its wording has probably been adapted to the talmudic topical interests.

The import of translation: Rav Yoseph ≈ TgJon

b. Pes. 68a

When the Mishna discusses certain actions that are normally prohibited on a shabbat but allowed in connection with the Passover sacrifice, it includes the *מחוי קרבי* 'cleansing of the intestines' (m. Pes. 6.1). The *gemara* in b. Pes. 68a tries to define what this exactly means (cited after MS ColX):

ומיחוי קרביו מאי מיחוי קרביו רב הונא אמ' מנקבן בסכין חייא בר רב אמ' שירקא דמעיא אמ' ר' אילא מאי טעמיה דחייא בר רב דכת' וחרבות מחים גרים יאכלו מאי משמעא כדמדרגס רב יוסף ונכסי רשיעיא צדיקא יחסון

'And *מחוי* [the cleansing of its bowels]' (m. Pes. 6.1). What is [the meaning of] *מחוי*? Rav Huna said, That they perforate them with a knife. *Ḥiyya*⁸⁷ bar Rav said, The fatty secretion of the bowels.⁸⁸

Said R. Ilay,⁸⁹ What is the reason of *Ḥiyya* bar Rav? Because it is written, 'And strangers shall feed on the ruins of the fatlings' (Isa. 5.17).

What does this mean? As Rav Yoseph translates, 'The righteous will inherit the properties⁹⁰ of the wicked'.

⁸⁷Vilna has *רב* between brackets, probably based on Ven; the absence of a title in ColX is supported by Ox23, Mun95, Mun6, Rab1623, Vat109 and Vat134 (despite a filler made up of *ח* which resembles a *ד* to some extent). Vat125 reads *ר*. The absence is preferable; in the next line, none of these witnesses has a title for *Ḥiyya* bar Rav.

⁸⁸Vilna and Ven read the plus *דנפקא אגב דוחקא דסכינא* 'which can be pushed out by [applying] pressure with a knife'; Mun6, Rab1623, Vat125 support ColX while a shorter plus *דנפיק אגב דוחקא* is attested in Mun95, Ox23, Vat109 (with *שורקא*); Vat134 (with *דנגדן*), Vat125 (2nd hand, interlinear). The explanatory phrase *דנפיק אגב דוחקא* also occurs in b. M. Qat. 22a and Hūl. 50a; the expression *דסכינא* *אגב דוחקא* is attested in Hūl. 8b.

⁸⁹Vilna reads 'Eliezer' but prefers 'Eleazar' by marginal correction. There was either no attribution at all (so Vat109) or, more likely, one to R. Ilay as attested by ColX, Mun6 (*אילא*); Vat125, Vat134, Ox23 and Ven (*אילעא*); Rab1623 (*אלא*). The abbreviation in Mun95, *אליע*, supports Vilna.

⁹⁰Only Mun6 supports Vilna in the proleptic suffix construction: *ונכסיהון דרשיעיא* (Ven and Vilna with the suffix *ון*); Rab1623, ColX agree with TgJon *ונכסי רשיעיא*; Mun95, Ox23 *נכסי רשיעיא*; Vat134 *נכסי רשיע*; Vat109, Vat125 *ניכסי רשיעיא*. Vat134 has the error *יחסון* for

The quotation corresponds to TgJon,⁹¹ but what does it help explaining? R. Ilay adduced Isa. 5.17 as evidence for Ḥiyya bar Rav's interpretation, that the cleansing refers to the fatty secretion of the intestines: the word מַחִים 'fatlings' in Isa. 5.17 resembles our mishna's מִיֶּחֱיוֹ 'cleansing'. Thus the cleansing refers to putrid matter which can only be removed by applying pressure,⁹² not just by perforation as Rav Huna understands מִיֶּחֱיוֹ ('liquefaction').⁹³ On the other hand, Rav Yoseph takes מַחִים 'fatlings' as a metaphor for wealthy persons who are identified as 'the wicked', whose possessions will be inherited by the righteous. The Aramaic translation helps us to understand the dispute because, we must assume, R. Ilay and Rav Yoseph both understand מַחִים as something that is repulsive, related to fat, which supports Ḥiyya bar Rav over against Rav Huna.

This reading of the sugya is possible, but Rav Yoseph's translation is hardly the obvious way to make the point that מִיֶּחֱיוֹ denotes the cleansing of intestinal secretion, all the more since the interpretative translation of Rav Yoseph replaces the Hebrew metaphor by something that has no direct bearing on the mishna's focus on cleansing or Ḥiyya bar Rav's interpretation of מִיֶּחֱיוֹ as 'fatty secretion'. The focus is on the מַחִים which were well-known as fatlings the psalmist offered up to God (עֹלֹת מַחִים) אַעֲלֶה לָךְ, Ps. 66.15). The mere reference to the word מַחִים in Isaiah as 'fatlings' settles the dispute itself, as R. Ilay actually suggests without Rav Yoseph's translation, which—not cited by himself, but indirectly by an anonymous voice—emerges as an afterthought to the discussion that has now been concluded.

All this is not to deny Rav Yoseph's translation a say in its place. What the targum sets out to achieve is to clarify Isa. 5.17 for its own sake, because this verse, decisive in the dispute about מִיֶּחֱיוֹ, is so enigmatic that it calls for an explanation. Once given, that explanation does not necessarily relate to the dispute between our two rabbis, or only in a derived sense. The quotation of TgJon also serves as the transition to what follows, which may be its real *raison d'être*. While Rav Ilay cites the second clause of Isa. 5.17, the gemara backtracks and focuses on the first half of the verse:

יִחְסֹנוּ. Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, p. 201 overstate the difference between TgJon and Vilna because they only based their observations on Vilna.

⁹¹ Apart from a minor difference (see n. 90 above).

⁹² The use of a knife seems to be assumed; see n. 88 above.

⁹³ Cf. Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 656. Rashi refers to b. Pes. 35a and m. M. Shen. 5.1.

ורעו כבשים כדברם אמ' רב מנישא בר ירמיה אמ' רב כמדובר בם אמ' אביי וחרבות
מחים גרים יאכלו

'And sheep shall graze as in their meadows' (Isa. 5.17).⁹⁴ Said Menashya⁹⁵ bar Yirmeya, Said Rav, As was spoken of them. [What is 'as spoken of them?']⁹⁶ Said Abaye, [It is] 'and strangers shall feed on the ruins of the fatlings'.

The phrase 'as was spoken of them' is an interpretation of כדברם as כמדובר בם. The sheep, a metaphor for Israel, will live as comfortably as the second half of the verse announces. TgJon's full translation of Isa. 5.17 aligns itself with this talmudic interpretation: ויתפרנסון צדיקיא כמה דאמיר עליהון ונכסי רשיעיא צדיקיא יחסנון 'And the righteous will be sustained as is stated of them, and the properties of the wicked, the righteous will inherit'. The Targum, in keeping with its strategy to replace metaphors by non-metaphorical references,⁹⁷ espouses the talmudic interpretation of the verse as a prophecy of Israel. There is little doubt that the anonymous inclusion of this Aramaic quotation explains the prophecy in line with Rav and Abaye, hence with the text that follows the targum. Without the targum, the text would be no different in the points it makes, but the presumed meaning of Isa. 5.17 would be less well understood, and the shift to its exegesis less smooth.

b. Yom. 77b

In the interest of preserving arguments, the incremental growth of the tradition would always be supposed to support one or another position in the received text. However, some of the Rav Yoseph-traditions do not support the received text but offer a dissenting voice which is not formally marked as an objection or contradiction. The very fact that the opposing potential remains unrealized marks such traditions as late supplements to the body of the text; an afterthought here is a temporally late addition to the text, which was, in this case erratically, believed to enhance its argument.

⁹⁴At this point, ms Mun95 has the plus: מאי כדברם.

⁹⁵Mun6, ColX מנישא; Mun95, Rabi623, Ox23, Vati09, Ven and Vilna מנישא (Vati25 מנישה). Vati34 reads מנש.

⁹⁶The clause מאי כמדובר בם is supported by Mun6, Mun95, Rabi623, Ox23, Vati09, Vati25's margin, Ven and Vilna, but absent from ColX and Vati34. Vati34 also misses the next two words, אמר אביי.

⁹⁷See, i.a., Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, p. 85; Smelik, 'Concordance and Consistency: Translation Studies and Targum Jonathan', *JJS* 49 (1998), pp. 286–305 (301–302); Van Staaldoune-Sulman, *Targum of Samuel*, pp. 105–107.

In b. Yoma 77b a translation in the name of Rav Yoseph is found in the context of abstinence on the Day of Atonement, more specifically the conditions under which it is permitted to cross a river and thereby risk transgression of the command not to wash any part of the body. In a *baraita* 'our rabbis' permit to wade through a river, even with the water up to one's neck, to visit a parent, teacher or superior. Rav Yoseph objects that even on weekdays such a crossing is too dangerous, and adduces Ezek. 47:3-5 as evidence that it is only permitted to cross a river with the water up to one's waist. Abaye counters that this restriction applies to the fast-flowing stream from the visionary temple in Ezekiel, not to usual rivers. The following two theses (יכול) which are promptly rejected by a proof-text (תלמוד לומר) from the same chapter, raise the issue of crossing the river by swimming or by boarding small or large vessels. It is at this junction that an Aramaic translation is quoted (following Rab218):

אמ' אבבי שאני ההוא נחלא דרדפי מייא דתניא⁹⁸ יכול יעביירו בסחוי ת"ל כ גי
המים מסחו מאי סחו אמ' ר' חונא⁹⁹ שיטא שכן קורין בבבל¹⁰⁰ שיטא סחיא יכול
יעביירו בבורני¹⁰¹ קטנה ת"ל בל תלך בו אני שיט יכול¹⁰² יעביירו בבורני גדולה ת"ל
וצי אדיר לא יעברנו מאי משמעיה כיד מתרגים רב יוסף לא תיזול ביה ספינת¹⁰³ ציידין
ובורני רבתא לא תגזיניה

Abaye said to him, 'That river is different for its waters run wild, as it was taught, Could it be that someone may cross [the river] by swimming? [No,] Scripture says, 'For the waters had risen, waters [deep enough] to swim in [and the river could not be crossed]' (Ezek. 47:5).

What does *סחוי* mean? Said Rav Huna, 'Swim', for a swimmer is called *סחיא* in Babylonia.¹⁰⁴

Could it be that someone may pass it in a small Liburnian boat? [No,]

⁹⁸Rab218's דתניא is supported by Mun6 (כדתניא), Mun95's margin, Rab1623, Rab218, Ox23, and Guad ('a Spanish print'), but a minus in Lon400, Mun95 (1^o), Ven and Vilna.

⁹⁹Rab218's חונא אמ' ר' חונא is supported by Mun6, Mun95, Lon400, Rab1623, but a minus in Ox23, Guad, Ven and Vilna.

¹⁰⁰Rab218's בבבל is absent in Vilna and Ven, but supported (in a different word order, בבבל קורין) by Mun6, Mun95, Lon400, Ox23 and Guad. Rab1623 has a lacuna at this point, but the required space.

¹⁰¹For these ships, see D. Sperber, *Nautica Talmudica* (Ramat-Gan and Leiden: Bar-Ilan University Press and E.J. Brill, 1986), pp. 137–38; Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, II, p. 302.

¹⁰²The כ in יכול is a correction for another letter which is unclear.

¹⁰³בספינת: Rab218, Mun6, Mun95, Ox23, Lon400, Rab1623, Guad; but Ven, Vilna בספינת.

¹⁰⁴As the argument states, *סחיא* is indeed Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA), whereas *שיטא* is Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPA).

Scripture says, 'Where no floating vessels can sail' (Isa. 33.21).

Could it be that someone may cross it in a big Liburnian ship? [No.] Scripture says, 'and no mighty craft can travel' (Isa. 33.21).

How does it indicate this? As Rav Yoseph translates, 'Where no fishing boat can go, nor a big Liburnian ship can pass through'.

The reference to Rav Yoseph's *targum* justifies the identification of floating vessels and mighty craft with small and large Liburnian boats—the identification of the generic with a specific vessel occurs in both the anonymous reply and the translation. Notwithstanding the similarity of interpretation, it is unclear what the translation contributes to the argument other than a partial confirmation of the vessels referred to in Scripture. That the *אדיר וצי* is a Liburnian vessel is implied by the citation of Isa. 33.21. If the identification had been troublesome, it should be noted that TgJon does not identify the small vessel (*אני שיט*) as Liburnian but as a fishing boat (*ספינת צייד*). Hence the translation does not entirely fit the talmudic argument, but perhaps partial supports sufficed for an identification that had already been established and no more was deemed necessary.

By and large Rav Yoseph's translation agrees with TgJon but for two details.¹⁰⁵ Three witnesses read *תהליך* for *תייל*,¹⁰⁶ a Hebraism. More conspicuous is the small variant reading *בספינת* in Ven and Vilna for TgJon's *ספינת*. That is an important adaptation to the Talmudic argument, as it changes the grammatical subject in the sentence from the ships to the second person:¹⁰⁷ 'Where you cannot go in a fishing boat'. The variant reading does alert us to the use of the *targum* in this *sugya* for its lexical input rather than its narrative import (TgJon does not focus on crossing the river, but navigating it, which does not suit the talmudic topic). The minus of the preposition could be explained as an omission to bring the text into line with TgJon, but obversely the change of subject with the preposition may have been the result of the discursive context. While Ven/Vilna cannot be discredited as less trustworthy than the manuscripts by default, the latter explanation, that their text has been adapted to the argument, is perhaps slightly easier.

¹⁰⁵ Minor variant readings occur, including TgJon's *ללא* for *לא* in the Talmudic MSS, but *לא* is also attested in TgJon's variant readings.

¹⁰⁶ So Ox23, Lon400 and Guad; *תייל*: Mun6, Mun95, Rab218, Rab1623, Ven and Vilna.

¹⁰⁷ With the preposition the verbs must be second person.

It is evident that Rav Yoseph's translation has been added to an existing argument without it, because the whole block from the suggestion to swim to the Liburnian ships has a very close parallel in t. Suk. 3.6-7(8) in which the translation does not occur. The parallel between b. Yom. 77b and t. Suk. 3 is in fact even closer than the cited lines, since the preceding texts are closely mirrored as well (t. Suk. 3.3[4]-5 / b. Yom. 77b): on the basis of Ezek. 47.2-5, both texts argue that one may cross a river when the water reaches up to the ankles, knees, or even loins, but no further. There are some differences between the Tosefta and the Bavli, not least in the attributions to named sages, but the core and essence of successive arguments is the same between both documents. The equation of Isa. 33.21's וְצִי אֲדִיר with a Liburnian boat, again without translation, also occurs in γ. Sheq. 6.2, 50a (and b. R. Hash. 23a), in the Yerushalmi once more embedded in a series of interpretations that is structurally similar to the Tosefta, including the argument that the water may go up to the ankles, knees and loins. I do not wish to argue that this block in the Bavli was lifted from a previous source, but only that the structure of the argument stood and that the translation did not form part of that structure. Indeed, Rav Yoseph's translation identifies only one of the ships as Liburnian.¹⁰⁸

The equation of the vessels with Liburnian ships may have been informed by a word play between יַעֲבִרְנוּ and בִּוּרְנִי, as well as familiarity with the various Liburna-type ships common in the Roman empire. Rav Yoseph's translation adds additional support for an interpretation which long stood and had been delivered anonymously in the Tosefta and the Yerushalmi, and in the name of Rav in b. R. Hash. 23a.¹⁰⁹ It must have been added onto the text when the lexical agreement of his translation and the talmudic interpretation occurred to a later tradent, who thought that its addition would enhance the existing argument. The translation has no consequence for the reasoning other than contradicting the identification of the אֲנִי שֵׁיט 'rowboat' given previously in b. Yom. 77b.

¹⁰⁸Interestingly, the Tosefta and Yerushalmi only identify the וְצִי אֲדִיר with a Liburna.

¹⁰⁹In Rab1608, רב, רב יהודה אמ' רב supported by Mun95; Mun140 reads רב יהודה אמ', while Lon400, Ox23, Rab108, Pes1511 and Vilna read רב אמ'. Rab1608 and Mun95 also add an argument that is absent in the other witnesses.

Summary of Further Findings

There are several further instances of targumic statements by Rav Yoseph which follow the same patterns; I will summarize them below. In b. Qid. 13a, Rav Yoseph's translation comments on the choice and meaning of a proof-text and illuminates the presupposition in the discussion,¹¹⁰ but it does not actively inform the line of reasoning. In b. Men. 110a, his citation of a lengthy clause from TgJon confirms the double meaning of a Hebrew lexeme but this meaning is ultimately derived from another biblical verse and the translation is detachable without altering the argument of the unit. In b. Yom. 32b his translation secondarily illuminates how an already established interpretation has been achieved (see y. Yom. 3.4, 40c). In b. M. Qat. 26a the translation informs one part of the talmudic argument, but blots the two other parts (father, mother) which are relevant for the talmudic discourse; the talmudic argument is independent from TgJon which only serves to illuminate and confirm part of the interpretative move *post factum*. In b. B. Qam. 3b the reference to TgJon's translation of Obad. 6 implicates the targum as a repository of lexical equivalents to illuminate Hebrew lexemes, even though the Talmud applies it to animal havoc whereas TgJon speaks of the tenor of human enemies who spoil the land, and as a consequence the targum is cited in support of one opinion (animal havoc) against another (human destruction) in the same paragraph although TgJon in its narrative integrity would actually support the latter. Finally, in b. Ned. 38a the citation does not really add to the information already culled from the Hebrew text, that the prophet Amos was a wealthy landowner, which TgJon's citation hardly reinforces, so that the Aramaic translation may have been pasted into the discussion as a kind of afterthought in the interest of preserving knowledge, which is all the more likely considering that the series as a whole, occasional insertions notwithstanding, is put into the mouth of R. Yoḥanan, a Palestinian Amora of the third century CE.

These close readings suggest that Rav Yoseph's translation was cited to add to a discourse which was already done. Each of the occurrences is raised by the anonymous voice, with the sole exception of the ones in the following section (which are mooted by late voices as I will argue below). As an afterthought each of these citations seeks to affirm one point on the basis of a scriptural interpretation in the Aramaic translation, or

¹¹⁰ Contrast Lam. R. Proem 23; Pes. K. 1.9. Cf. TanB. נשנ 6 (Tan. 4); Num. R. 9.1.

sometimes just to illuminate, as an aside, what a cited verse is about, whether or not it sheds light on the issue at hand.

Were it not for the translation of this verse...

Two of Rav Yoseph's quotations refer to difficult verses which he claims not to have understood without the Aramaic translation, which corresponds to TgJon in both instances. In b. Meg. 3a Rav Yoseph cites TgJon Zech. 12.11, a tradition which also occurs in b. M. Qat. 28b.¹¹¹ In the next chapter I will argue that in these two instances Rav Yoseph's citation was latched onto the body of the discussion, and that it belongs to a relatively late editorial layer of the Bavli.¹¹² The third case occurs in b. San. 94b, where we find a series of expositions about Sennacherib, who, as a true Jewish scholar, is said to have inferred from Isa. 8.6-7 that God willed him to campaign against Yuda (cited after MS Flor):

אמ' ר' יהושע בן לוי מאי דכת' ועתה המבלעדי ייי עליתי מן הארץ הזאת להחריבה
יי אמר אלי עלה אל הארץ הזאת והשחתה והיכן מצינו שאמ' לו הקבה דכת' כי מאס
את העם הזה את מי השילוח ההולכים לאט ומשוש את רסין ואת רמליהו אמ' רב יוסף
אילמל' תרגומיה דהאי קרא לא הוה ידענא מאי קאמ' חלף דקץ עמא הדין במלכותא
דבית דוד דמדברא להון בנייחא כמי שילוחא דנגדין בנייחא איתרעין ברסין ובן רמליהו
Said R. Yehoshua b. Levi, What [does it mean] that is written, 'And do you
think I have marched against this land to destroy¹¹³ it without the LORD?
The LORD Himself told me:¹¹⁴ Go up against that land and destroy it' (2 Kgs
18.25).¹¹⁵

Where do we find that the Holy One blessed be He spoke to him? Because it is written,¹¹⁶ 'Inasmuch as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice in Resin¹¹⁷ and in Remalyahu's son' (Isa. 8.6).

Said Rav Yoseph, But for the targum of this verse, I would not know its

¹¹¹ A fourth case in b. Ber. 28b, mentioned by Alexander, 'Jewish Aramaic Translations', p. 223, does not exist, but may well be a typo for the citation of Meg. 3a in Tosafot Ber. 8b.

¹¹² See section 9.5 below.

¹¹³ Flor cites MT as להחריבה rather than להשחיתה.

¹¹⁴ Herzl reads לי rather than אלי.

¹¹⁵ The quotations vary in length between the witnesses: Mun95 stops at הארץ אל הארץ (and in the margin at that); Herzl at אמ' לי עלה וג'. Flor and Vilna offer the text quoted.

¹¹⁶ Flor's reading differs from Vilna, Mun95 and Barco, but Herzl comes close with היכא היכא אמר ליה דכת' Vilna: מאי היא דשמע לנביא דקאמר אמר ליה דכת' 'how is this? Because he heard the prophet say', supported by Barco and Mun95. Barco varies with דשמעיה and Mun95 with שמעי נבי'.

¹¹⁷ Flor reads ברסין ברצין (so Mun95, Herzl, Barco and Vilna).

meaning, 'Because this people have rejected the Davidic dynasty, which rules them with gentleness like the waters of Shiloah which flow tranquilly, and have set their desire upon Reşin and the son of Ramalyahu'.

The textual tradition surrounding this unit is unstable, namely in its order of the following two textual units, but apart from the introduction of the proof-text, there is little variation in the witnesses to the text quoted above.¹¹⁸ Rav Yoseph's translation agrees with TgJon, minor variant readings left aside.¹¹⁹ R. Yehoshua b. Levi's question is how Sennacherib could have claimed a divine mandate for his campaign, as stated in 2 Kgs. 18.25, with the answer found in Isa. 8.6. In the latter verse, the refusal of the waters of Shiloah stands for the people's rejection of a pacifying policy of loyalty towards their Assyrian overlords. The *targum's* rendition partially reflects this understanding of the prophecy as it explains, by typically turning the metaphors into similes, that the refusal of Shiloah's waters means rejection of the Davidic dynasty. The translation also explains how the difficult expression *וּמְשׁוּשׁ אֶת רִצְוֹ וּבֵן רַמְלִיּוֹ* is to be understood, namely as 'rejoicing' in the allies of Yuda against Assyria.

The interpretative nature of the *targum*, which offers a political equivalence for the gentle waters of Shiloah, goes a long way to justifying Rav Yoseph's reliance on the translation inasmuch as he wished to understand Isa. 8.6. Nevertheless, Rav Yoseph's praise of the *targum* cannot apply to R. Yehoshua b. Levi's question because the Hebrew and Aramaic versions of Isa. 8.6 do not answer that question. The Aramaic and the Hebrew versions focus solely on Israelite disloyalty, but neither text explains how Sennacherib could have justified his attack by claiming biblical backing. The proof-text is expected to deliver such support: 'Where do we find that the Holy One blessed be He spoke to him [= Sennacherib]?' In fact, the evidence was there all along. The real ground for Sennacherib's ill-judged confidence rests not on Isa. 8.6 but on the next verse, 8.7: 'Assuredly, my LORD will bring up against them the mighty, massive waters of the Euphrates, the king of Assyria and all his multitude'.¹²⁰ Isa. 8.7 is so explicit about divine backing of the Assyrian assault that Sennacherib did

¹¹⁸ In the Vilna edn, our passage precedes one about R. Yoḥanan's interpretation of Prov. 3.33 and one of Isa. 8.7, but the first two units appear in reverse order in Mun95. In Herzl the last two units appear in reverse order.

¹¹⁹ t705 has a comment based on Gematria which differs from both Talmud and TgJon.

¹²⁰ See Pes. K. 6.2.

Pseudepigraphy (Writings)

The end of tractate Sota in the Mishna mentions three rituals that are no longer practised because of changed circumstances: the heifer whose neck is to be broken, the *sota* ritual, and the confession of the tithe (9.9-10). Their mention triggers a series of practices, professions, or things which came to an end, suggesting a progressive and rapid deterioration over the past two or three centuries, while simultaneously creating an image of the distant past as more sublime. In this context m. Sot. 9.12 includes the disappearance of both the Shamir, a unique creature which Moses is said to have used,¹²¹ and the droppings of the honeycomb. The *gemara* of b. Sot. 48b deals with the exact reference of the latter phrase (Vilna):

ונופת צופים מאי נופת צופים אמר רב סולת שצפה על גבי נפה ודומה לעיסה שנילושה בדבש ושמן ולוי¹²² אמר שתי ככרות הנדבקות בתנור ותופחות¹²³ ובאות עד שמגיעות זו לזו¹²⁴ ורבי יהושע בן לוי¹²⁵ אמר זה דבש הבא מן הציפיא מאי משמע כדמתרגם רב ששת¹²⁶ כמה דנתון דבריאתה ושיטן ברומי עלמא ומתיין דובשא מעישיב טורא¹²⁷ 'The droppings of the honeycomb' (Ps. 19.11/m. Sot. 9.12). What does נופת צופים mean? Rav said, The sifted fine flour which flows on top of a winnow and resembles dough which is kneaded with honey and oil. But Levi said, Two loaves joined in an oven which are rising and coming until they touch each other. But Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, This is the honey which comes from the high mountains.¹²⁸

How does [the text] signify this? As Rav Shesheth translates, 'When the bees fly off and roam about on the heights of the world and bring honey from the herbs of the mountain[s]'.¹²⁹

In the Vilna edition, Rav Shesheth's translation is accompanied by a marginal comment that this 'translation' was uttered by Rav Yoseph according to another source. Indeed, where Vilna reads כדמתרגם רב ששת, mss Ox20, Mun95 and Ox2833 read כדמתרגם רב יוסף 'as Rav Yoseph interprets' which

¹²¹ For the Shamir, see below, p. 383.

¹²² Mun95, Vat110 read חייא ולוי resp. חיה ולוי.

¹²³ Vat110 reads ותחובות for ותופחות, Ox20 נופחות.

¹²⁴ Vat110 reads בזו for לזו.

¹²⁵ In Mun95 בן לוי is a minus.

¹²⁶ For כדמתרגם רב ששת, Ox20, Mun95 and Ox2833 (and Vilna's margin) read כדמתרגם רב יוסף 'as Rav Yoseph interprets' which also receives support from Rashi's exemplar; see Liss, מסכת שוטה, p. שלח. Vat110 only reads ומתרגם.

¹²⁷ The plural טוריא is supported by Mun95, Ox20, Ox2833, Vat110 and Ven.

¹²⁸ The same interpretation in y. Sot. 9.12, 24b (in the name of R. Leazar).

also receives support from Rashi's exemplar. However, Vatiio has ומתרגם without any attribution, leaving us with three ascriptions: Rav Shesheth, Rav Yoseph, or an anonymous voice.

In Vatiio the verb is preceded by the following plus: 'מאי משמע דכתי' כאשר תעשינה הדבורים ומתרגם, 'How does it signify this? As it is written, "As bees do" (Deut. 1.44), and one translates...' This biblical quotation is absent in the other witnesses (including Rashi's exemplar), but would suggest that what follows is its scriptural translation. But even though the 'translation' agrees with TgOnq Deut. 1.44, it only follows TgOnq as far as its first three words go (כמא דנתון דבריתא); the remainder of the translation is unique to the talmudic passage. Some translations in the Bavli differ from the 'Babylonian' Targums, but this is not one of them. The whole phrase would be entirely out of place in the co-text of Deut. 1.44, whether in the Hebrew or the Aramaic versions.¹²⁹ There is no reason to relate this 'translation' to the scriptural passage; conversely, the sentence may stand independently as an interpretation of the mishna's ונפת צופים.¹³⁰ Accordingly, כדמתרגם, רב ששת (or any variant) does not mark a scriptural translation but an interpretation of the mishna's wording—a use of the verb which is, as we observed,¹³¹ quite common in the Bavli.

If so, the connection of the translation to Rav Yoseph has all the hallmarks of a late development, an attribution following his reputation as one knowledgeable in targum following a misunderstanding of the meaning of the verb תרגם, which inspired some copyist or glossator to provide a suitable Hebrew source-text in MS Vatiio. Such a source text, he could have argued, invariably precedes the translations of Rav Yoseph or of 'as we translate'. The absence of the Hebrew source text in all other textual witnesses (the 'negative' format) renders the translation suspect as a quotation of a version. The attribution to Rav Shesheth is most likely genuine, his translation an interpretative move.

¹²⁹For TgOnq here, cf. Y. Komlosh, המקרא באור התרגום (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1973), p. 146. Grossfeld overstates the similarity by claiming that the translation 'is cited in toto' in the talmudic passage; B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), p. 21 n. 23. Note that ומתיין is not Jewish Literary Aramaic (JLA) but JBA.

¹³⁰It must be deemed unlikely that this 'translation' reflects a lost version of Ps. 19.11 where the words ונפת צופים occur, as the glossator of Vatiio with Deut. 1.44 felt, because the translation is hard to reconcile even with expansive translations of Ps 19, whereas the assumption that it reflects an interpretation of the mishnaic lexeme is straightforward.

¹³¹See above, pp. 145–58.

The second Aramaic translation of the Writings attributed to Rav Yoseph, found in b. Naz. 3a, is very similar to the first case. It concerns a translation of Job 5.10: *על פני חוצות* 'he sends waters on the fields',¹³² but there is little reason to take this tradition for a genuine translation either authored or transmitted by Rav Yoseph. The formula *כדמתרגם רב יוסף* is bracketed in the Vilna edition,¹³³ and while the phrase is included without brackets in Ven, it is absent from Mun95, Günz and Vat110. The translation itself, *זכד משקין ליה מיא לפירא ורבי* 'when they water the crop it shoots up' fits the talmudic co-text about the meaning of *שלח* as a term for 'increase', but has very little to do with Job 5.10 which, in a far more generic sense, praises the great wonders of God, not the cultivation of a crop. TgJob does not agree with this translation,¹³⁴ and there is ample reason to question the character of this quotation as an instance of scriptural translation, certainly as a quotation from a continuous Aramaic version, rather than an interpretative comment ad-hoc in Aramaic. Thus this passage turns out to be similar to the previous case we discussed, with the absence of the attribution to Rav Yoseph undoubtedly original.

Whether or not Rav Yoseph ever taught Aramaic translations of the Writings, these two traditions are neither genuine scriptural translations nor traditions that originated with Rav Yoseph. They are likely to have been attributed to him because he had become a brand name for the Aramaic Bible translations.¹³⁵ That would also explain why the Targum to Chronicles is traditionally known as the Targum of Rav Yoseph. All this is legend: the Targums to the Writings are not a uniform corpus and they are written in a dialect of Aramaic later than that of TgJon or Rav Yoseph's vernacular. Moreover, Rav Yoseph's involvement in TgWritings of any kind is questionable on the basis of Babylonian opposition to such versions and widespread ignorance of their existence in Babylonia.

Tradition has the tendency to emphasize the outlines of patterns that have emerged in times past, in particular those of famous ancestors. Thus Hillel becomes all the more lenient, Shammai more stringent. In turn, Rav Yoseph is credited with more and more translations whether or not he

¹³²Vat110; Vilna and Mun95 cite *שלח מים* with the longer quotation appearing a few lines earlier.

¹³³With a marginal comment stating that it is not found in other 'books'.

¹³⁴See Stec, Targum of Job, p. 36*.

¹³⁵Cf. Tosafot to b. B. Qam. 3b.

actually said them on the occasions he is supposed to have done so. This process may also explain some of Rav Yoseph's scriptural translations of the Prophets which are embedded in the editorial layer of the *gemara*—and may have been supplemented at a later stage. Even if such citations from TgJon were included in the *gemara* at a much later stage, they may still genuinely preserve the authentic Aramaic version which he transmitted, but we can no longer be certain about that. All we can say is that the reference came about when the Talmud was in the process of redaction, however we envisage this process. The recognition of such supplements is important for our understanding of when these citations were used, but even more for the question how they were used in the halakhic discourse.

8.3 As we translate

The second category of explicit quotations of scriptural translation, marked by the phrase 'as we translate' occurs in the Bavli and in the classical Midrashim.¹³⁶ The vast majority of these citations agree with TgOnq, thirty-seven in all, compared to seven citations from a Targum to the Prophets—only two in the Bavli—and three of a Targum to the Writings, all of which are found in Midrash Psalms. This is not the place to discuss the implications of these citations for the date of TgOnq, in particular in those cases where the citation is ascribed to a named sage, but rather to evaluate whether and how *targum* was used by sages of various generations and the anonymous voice.

Below I will distinguish between the Bavli and the Midrashim. In the Bavli, where this phrase in Babylonian Aramaic is at home, a conspicuous number of such 'as we translate'-citations is ascribed to named sages, in which the anonymous 'we' that 'translate' and attributed statements collide.¹³⁷ The number of citations raised by the anonymous voice almost equals those which are put in the mouth of named sages, namely eight

¹³⁶The only citations of 'as Rav Yoseph translates' in the Midrashim occur in late medieval compilations, which can safely be disregarded here.

¹³⁷Ascribed: b. Shab. 10b; 28a; 64a; b. R. Hash. 33b; b. Meg. 10b; b. Naz. 39a; b. B. Qam. 116b; b. B. Bat. 12b; b. San. 106b; b. A. Zar. 17b; b. Bek. 50a; b. Arak. 15b; b. Ḥul. 139b. See also Gen. R. 8.1; 43.9. Anonymous: b. R. Hash. 22b; b. M. Qat. 2a (2x); b. Git. 68b; b. B. Qam. 38a; b. A. Zar. 44a; b. Ḥul. 80a; b. Nid. 31b. The occurrence in Lam. R. 3.1.1, is a gloss (cf. Buber's edn).

versus thirteen, give and take one or two, for it must be said that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain whether a quotation is ascribed to a named sage or not.¹³⁸ Even so, the distinction may well be significant. The import of the translations ascribed to named sages plays a pivotal role in the interpretative activity, whereas those raised by the anonymous voice tend to be inconsequential afterthoughts. The evidence is in the detail of the close readings that follow.

Named sages

b. Naz. 39a, b. Shab. 28a, 64a (Rav Yoseph)

In three instances Rav Yoseph refers to an Aramaic translation of the Tora, rather than the Prophets, and each of these is identified by him with the phrase 'as we translate' in contrast to the citations of the Prophets discussed above. These three instances merit closer attention, because they stand out in the way Rav Yoseph presents the evidence. One citation would seem to suggest that the way 'we translate' Num. 6.4 follows leading rabbinic opinions (b. Naz. 39a):

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר כו' אמר רב יוסף כמאן מתרגמינן מפורצנין ועד עיצורין
כר' יוסי

'Rabbi Eleazar b. Azarya said' and so on (m. Naz. 6.2). Rav Yoseph said, In accordance with whom do we translate,¹³⁹ 'From the kernels to the skins'? In accordance with R. Yose.

The talmudic translation agrees with TgOnq,¹⁴⁰ and crucially identifies the חרצן as the kernel of the grape in agreement with R. Yose's opinion, whereas TgPsJ identifies the חרצן as the skin in agreement with R. Yehuda's view: 'neither the wine husks nor the pips'¹⁴¹

¹³⁸When 'R. PN said', we frequently cannot be sure how long that quotation continues. That citations of TgOnq are sometimes doubtful on historical grounds may be evident in b. B. Bat. 12b, where both R. Abdimi from Haifa and R. Huna the son of R. Yehoshua refer to the way 'we translate' Exod. 27.8—at least in Ox249, EscGI3, Flor, Mun95, Vat115; but only the former cites targum in Ham165, H1337, Pes1511 and Vilna. It could be a case of haplography, or glossing, and it is even possible that both citations have been inserted into the argument, as the text easily stands without the way 'we translate'.

¹³⁹The Ven edn reads מתרגמא, but Günz, Mun95 and Vat110 support Vilna.

¹⁴⁰TgNeof and TgPsJ differ in their translations from TgOnq.

¹⁴¹The word יג usually has the meaning 'skin'; cf. Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 173 (no. 3). However, as E.G. Clarke pointed out, the immediate context suggests the meaning 'pip' (E.G.

within the grapes'. TgNeof goes its own way with *מִן כְּמִישָׁן עַד פֶּגַן* 'from the withered unto the unripe [grape]'.¹⁴² TgOnq's translation is far from self-evident; TgPsJ, Septuagint and Peshitta agree with R. Yehuda's view.¹⁴³ The formulation *כְּמִאן מִתְּרַגְּמִין* suggests that the translation took its cue from R. Yose, investing the ultimate authority in rabbinic statements, rather than independently supporting R. Yose, although it should be stated that rulings based on certain views tend to be formulated with *כְּמִאן* anywhere in the Bavli; the fact that the way 'we translate' is presented as such in fact marks it as a halakhic voice. It is an isolated incident, for the formula *כְּמִאן מִתְּרַגְּמִין* 'in accordance with whom do we translate' only occurs here.

The two remaining quotations of TgOnq by Rav Yoseph feature the introduction *דְּמִתְּרַגְּמִין* *אִי הֵינּוּ כִּי יוֹסֵף רַב* 'Said Rav Yoseph, If so, is this not as we translate'. The phrase is traditionally understood as a support of a previously given opinion or as testimony that the opinion has been implemented in translation, as Rashi points out (*סִייעָתָא הִיא*) in his commentary to b. Shab. 28a, although it would seem that he adds this comment precisely because a problem or a refutation is expected instead.¹⁴⁴ For a 'support' such phrasing is peculiarly uncertain, as if dependent on other evidence: 'if so'—yet if not, the argument does not stand. If it is a support, it affirms the preceding interpretation without establishing it, since the support comes *after* the hermeneutic 'event'. Such a wavering affirmation makes sense if it expresses not so much evidence in support of the preceding view but its implementation in translation: 'if so... we translate (accordingly)'. In my view the *אִי הֵינּוּ כִּי* clause introduces an objection or counter-argument based on the fact that a difficulty arises from the

Clark, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers* [AB, 4; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995], p. 203; the translation of TgPsJ is his). He overlooked, however, that TgPsJ simply transfers R. Yehuda's meaning that Hebrew *גִּפְּסִים* means 'pips': *דְּבִרֵי רַבִּי יְהוּדָה*: *הַזֵּיגִים אֱלוֹ הַפְּנִימִים*.

¹⁴² Contrast M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Numbers* (AB, 4; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), p. 48: 'even raisins or pips'. Cf. Levy, CWT, II, p. 252 (who cites a Fragmentary Tg not included in Klein's edn); Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 424 (פגג). A marginal comment in TgNeof Aramaises the Hebrew: *חֲרָצְנָה וְעַד זִיגִיָּה*.

¹⁴³ They agree in the gist of their translations, taking the first word to denote the skin, the second the kernel. LXX: 'from the grape husks to the seeds'; Pesh: 'from the pressed [skins] unto the shrivelled grapes'. Vulg: *ab uva passa usque ad acinum* 'from the raisin even to the kernel'.

¹⁴⁴ Mielziner, *Introduction to the Talmud*, p. 259 is specific as to the introductions which mark a refutation: *אִי הֵינּוּ כִּי מֵאִי אִירִיא ... אִפִּילּוּ ... נָמִי* and *אִי הֵינּוּ כִּי אִפִּילּוּ ... נָמִי*.

identity of A and B in 'if A, is that not the same as [we translate in] B' (and therefore invalid).

The proper understanding of the clause *אי הכי היינו דמתרגמינן* is decisive for the import of Rav Yoseph's translation: if it introduces an objection based on the way 'we translate', that translation bears authority, whereas in the traditional understanding it follows the argument with the result that the translation reflects the discourse rather than contributing to it. The former situation of a refutation is (despite Rashi) evident in b. Shab. 28a, which discusses the composition of the tent cover of the Tabernacle Moses had built. Rav Yoseph objects to R. Nehemya's view that the cover was a single but composite cover of ram and porpoise skin, because a cover of porpoise skin alone already would have multiple colour (hence not exclude a second cover made of ram skin): 'Rav Yoseph said, If so, is this not [the same] as we translate [Hebrew תחש with] "scarlet", because it rejoices in multiple colours?'.¹⁴⁵ As a refutation, the import of the way 'we translate' is strong and conclusive.

I will illustrate this use of TgOnq by Rav Yoseph with b. Shab. 64a, where the clause *אי הכי היינו* 'if so, this is why (we translate)' introduces the translation of Num. 31.50. Once more the clause introduces a refutation rather than evidence in support of a previously given opinion, but in the case under consideration here the argument shifts uneasily. The discussion of this verse is a digression from the topic of corpse defilement; here, the focus is on the meaning of two nouns (cited after Vatro8):

ונקרב את קרבן יי איש אשר מצא כלי זהב אצעה וצמיד טבעת עגיל וכומא"ר אלעזר
עגיל זה דפוס של דדין כומו זה דפוס של בית הרחם אמר רב יוסף אי הכי¹⁴⁶ היינו
דמתרגמינן¹⁴⁷ מחוך דבר הבא לידי גיחוך¹⁴⁸ אמר ליה רבא¹⁴⁹ מגופיה דקרא שמעת
מינה כומו כאן מקום זימה

'So we have brought as an offering to the LORD each what we found, articles of gold, armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings and pendants' (Num. 31.50). Said R. Eleazar, עגיל ('earring') is a mould of breasts, כומו ('pendants') is a mould of the womb.

¹⁴⁵For b. Shab. 28a, see W.F. Smelik, 'Rav Yoseph Translates', forthcoming.

¹⁴⁶Arx and Mun95 do not have *אי הכי*, as do Vatro8, Ox23, Son1489 and Vilna.

¹⁴⁷Ox23 reads *דמתרגם* instead of *דמתרגמינן*, a scribal error, possibly due to an abbreviation in the exemplar of Ox23.

¹⁴⁸Arx and Mun95 read *מחוך* instead of *גיחוך*, which would seem to be a scribal error due to the proximate occurrence of *מחוך* and a possible resemblance of *מ* to *ג*.

¹⁴⁹Mun95 reads *אביי* rather than *רבא*; Vilna reads *רבה*.

Said Rav Yoseph, If so, is this not as we translate [כֹּמוֹ with מִחוּךְ] 'bustier',¹⁵⁰ that which leads to fondling.

Said Rava to him, Infer it from the verse itself, כֹּמוֹ ('pendants'), here is the place of carnality.

The noun כֹּמוֹ presumably refers to 'a cluster of small ornaments',¹⁵¹ in the Bavli more specifically understood as an alluring object which covers either the female breasts or the female genitals. The named rabbis agree on the erotic substance of their interpretation but disagree on the detail. R. Eleazar takes כֹּמוֹ as a mould of the female womb while Rav Yoseph comes up with an Aramaic equivalent that denotes a 'bustier' or 'breast covering', both views also known from the parallel in the Yerushalmi.¹⁵² The relation with breasts appears to be evident from the use of the lexeme in כֹּמוֹ אֲדוּם in Sir. 32.5, even though the possibility cannot be excluded that the item in question also related to the womb, giving rise to the confusion in our sources.

It is far less evident how Rava's final comment fits in, or who he (or Abaye) responds to, Rav Yoseph or R. Eleazar. If he responds to Rav Yoseph, does he imply that proof should not be sought from the Aramaic equivalent (if, in fact, it is not Hebrew to begin with) while still agreeing with him, or does he disagree with Rav Yoseph? In any case, Rava (or Abaye) disagrees with the method of inference and roots the interpretation directly in Scripture itself without recourse to any *targum*. Because his take on כֹּמוֹ as an acronym (or *notarikon*), 'here (כ-אן) is the place (מ-קום) of carnality (ז-ימה)' more naturally refers to the womb, it seems most plausible that the original line of reasoning had R. Eleazar state that כֹּמוֹ is a covering for the female genitals, which Rava had rather inferred from the lexeme's letters themselves; Rav Yoseph's comment was wedged in between at a later stage.

¹⁵⁰ Or 'bodystock (for the breasts)'. See Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 322 (sub מִחוּךְ; oddly overlooked for DJBA); E. Cook, *A Glossary of Targum Onkelos: According to Alexander Sperber's Edition* (SAIS, 6; Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 149; A. Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* (2 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), II, p. 481; cf. Levy, WTM, III, p. 71. See TgNeof Gen. 49.22; Num. 31.50; cf. Exod. 35.22; B.B. Levy, *Targum Neophyti 1: A Textual Study* (2 vols.; Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), II, pp. 164–67.

¹⁵¹ J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p. 328 n. 68; HALAT, p. 442.

¹⁵² י. Shab. 6.4, 8b; see Table 8.6 below.

The question which remains is: what was the point of whoever inserted Rav Yoseph's comment, which in itself boasts a good lexical pedigree? There is evidence, as we have just seen, that the spottily attested formula *אי הכי* 'if so' can introduce a refutation rather than a support, which must be true in this case, as Rav Yoseph does not confirm the lexical interpretation of R. Eleazar but refutes the latter's view by proof derived from the way 'we translate', transferring R. Eleazar's interpretation of *עגיל* to *כומ*. In the process he validates lexical identifications which are based on scriptural translation. Note that his Aramaic translation, like some of Aquila's Greek translations (see below, section 8.4, and b. Shab. 28a), has been provided with a Hebrew exposition, suggesting that this is an actual translation that was glossed in Hebrew.

At the end of the day, Rav Yoseph's refutation under recourse to TgOnq is permissible but inconsequential, since Rava's final say suggests that R. Eleazar's view won the day. Regardless of which interpretation was vindicated, however, Rava highlights the predominant status of scriptural evidence over *targum* (or *realia*). All the same, Rav Yoseph's tentative argument may not clinch the discussion and may not have been more than a discursive rig; yet to be convincing his argument from translation must have been permissible as evidence. If inserted secondarily, the late interest in the permissibility of *targum* in halakhic discourse is still worthy of note although the argument may well be foremost an instance of an antiquarian interest in the preservation of information.

b. A. Zar. 17b

A limited number of instances quote a generic Hebrew–Aramaic equivalence which agrees with TgOnq only, and appear to reflect its version as the accepted translation. Interestingly, the main reason for citing it is to link another biblical text, outside the Tora, to the first verse.

In b. A. Zar. 17b the *gemara* offers a comment on Prov. 2.11, *מוֹמָה* *תשמר עליך תבונה תנצרכה* 'prudence will watch over you; and understanding will guard you'. The verse illustrates how R. Ḥanina and R. Yoḥanan were protected from the temptations of a brothel, because the prostitutes retreated from the street. The proof-text is analysed as follows:

א"ל רבנן לרבא מאי מוֹמָה אילימא תורה דכתיב בה זימה ומתרגמינן עצת חטאין
וכתיב הפליא עצה הגדיל תושיה אי הכי זימה מבעי ליה ה"ק מדבר זימה תשמור עליך
תורה תנצרכה

Said our rabbis to Rava, How is [this word] *mezimma* [to be understood]?

If we say [that it signifies] ‘Tora’ since it is written in it¹⁵³ (‘it is’¹⁵⁴ *zimma*), and we translate [this word with] ‘a counsel of sins’; and it is written, ‘wonderful is His counsel and great His wisdom’ (Isa. 28.29).

If that were the case, [the word] should have been *zimma*. This, then, is what it states, ‘Against things of lewdness she [var. the Tora] shall watch over you, the Tora shall guard you’.¹⁵⁵

In the end, not the word *מוֹמָה* but *תְּבוּנָה* is identified as the Tora. Nevertheless, the followed procedure is not invalidated and acknowledges the import of the Aramaic translation. The quoted translation—which occurs in TgOnq and TgJon, but not in TgNeof or TgPsJ¹⁵⁶—leads from Hebrew *זִמָּה* over its Aramaic equivalent *עֵיצָה* ‘counsel’ to the Tora as God’s counsel in Isa. 28.29.¹⁵⁷ Thus the Aramaic translation is integral to the hermeneutic action: it opens up another meaning for the Hebrew word in question, which is likened to its Hebrew cognate elsewhere. Moreover, the (not explicitly explained) connotation of ‘counsel’ in Isaiah as ‘Tora’ is transferred to the first text’s *מוֹמָה*.

b. San. 106b; b. Arak. 15b

A similar intermediate position of the Aramaic translation in the hermeneutic process is found in b. San. 106b and b. Arak. 15b. In these passages the rare Hebrew word *לְצִמְתָּה* ‘permanently’, which occurs in Lev. 25.23 and 30, is cited with the comment ‘as we translate, לחלוטין, entirely’. This translation is not remarkable, but literal, and agrees with TgOnq, TgNeof and TgPsJ.¹⁵⁸ But it is not the lexical equivalence that is important here; rather, the Aramaic lexeme allows for another transference of meaning. In b. Arak. 15b (following Lon402):

¹⁵³ So in W and H1337 (Mun95 reads *בה* or *ביה*); added by a second hand in Rab15.

¹⁵⁴ Interlinear addition of *היא* in Rab15, which identifies the text more narrowly as Lev. 18.17; otherwise, Lev. 19.29 and 20.14 would also have qualified.

¹⁵⁵ MS Rab15 cites *זִמָּה תִּשְׁמֹר עֲלֶיךָ* (with a word added by a second hand at the end, perhaps *תורה*); MSS Mun95 and H1337 read *זִמָּה תִּשְׁמֹר עֲלֶיךָ תורה*. Following the last reading, ‘Tora’ is the subject of the first clause and there is no second one.

¹⁵⁶ TgOnq Lev. 18.17, 19.29 and 20.14; the same equivalence occurs frequently in TgJon. TgNeof and TgPsJ have *זִנִּי* instead.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. b. San. 26b. TgJon Isa. 28.29 hints at, but does not explicitly refer to, the Tora: *דַּאֲתִקִּין עֲלָמָה בְּמַחֲשַׁבַּת דַּעְתִּיהָ רַבְתָּא אֲסָגִי עוֹבְדֵי בְּרִישִׁית בְּסָגִי חֲכַמְתִּיהָ*.

¹⁵⁸ In TgNeof Lev. 25.30 *לחלוטין*. *y. Dem.* 5.9, 24d explains this word as *לחלוטנית*.

וא"ר יוח' משום¹⁵⁹ ר' יוסי בן זמרה כל המספר לשון הרע נגעים באים עליו שנ' מלשני בסתר¹⁶⁰ רעהו אותו אצמית¹⁶¹ וכת' התם¹⁶² לצמיתות ומתרגמ' לחלוטין ותנן אין מצורע מוסגר למצורע מוחלט אלא פריע' ופרימי'¹⁶³

And R. Yoḥanan said in the name of R. Yose b. Zimra, Any one who slanders will be afflicted by leprosy, as it is said, 'He who slanders his friend in secret I will destroy' (Ps. 101.5). And there it is said, 'in perpetuity' (Lev. 25.30), which we translate, 'absolutely', and we learnt, 'The leper who is isolated [as a suspected sufferer] differs from the leper who is confirmed [as ritually impure] only in respect of unkempt hair and rent garments' (m. Meg. 1.7).

The argument is based on analogy: 'I will destroy' (אצמית, A) is compared to 'permanently' (לצמית, B) on the basis of etymology. Subsequently, the translation of the latter word in Aramaic, 'entirely' (לחלוטין, B-targum) is compared to the leper whose status of ritual impurity has been confirmed (מוחלט, C), on the basis of another etymological connection. In other words, A is analogue to B, and B's Targum is analogue to the mishna of C, so that the status of a confirmed leper in C applies to the slanderer of A. Hence, a slanderer will be punished by leprosy. A certain playfulness cannot be denied to this procedure—which has an aggadic rather than halakhic context—on the assumption that the translation conveys a meaning inherent to the Hebrew original. The Aramaic translation is indispensable in this interpretation.

The tradition is attributed to R. Yoḥanan in the name of R. Yose b. Zimra, two Palestinian Amoraim, but they do not necessarily quote TgOnq—the translation was relatively standard, dialectic variants notwithstanding.¹⁶⁴ In b. San. 106b, the tradition is attributed to R. Ashi,¹⁶⁵ who

¹⁵⁹וא"ר יוח' משום is a minus in Ven and Vilna, but supported by Ox370 (with the following typo of יוסף for יוסי), Lon402, Vat119, Vat120, Mun95; Ox2674 reads יוחנן א' ר' with the minus זמרה בן יוסי בן זמרה.

¹⁶⁰Vat120 has an error: בספר for בסתר.

¹⁶¹Vat120 cites the entire Ps. 101.5 (with an error).

¹⁶²התם וכתבי is a minus in Mun95, which also reads לצמיתות for ומתרגמין. Ox2674 does not support התם.

¹⁶³וא"ר יוח' משום is a minus in Mun95 and Ox2674.

¹⁶⁴See y. Dem. 5.9, 24d; Gen R. 28.9; y. Git. 4.9, 46b. See Goshen-Gottstein, שקיעים, מתרגומי המקרא, II, p. 117; R. Kalmin, 'Targum Onkelos and Rabbinic Literature', forthcoming. I thank Richard Kalmin for graciously sharing his unpublished work with me.

¹⁶⁵Although his name is bracketed in the Vilna edn, it is supported by mss Mun95, Reuz, Herzl and Flor.

applies the same process of B, B's translation, and C to Ps. 73.27, הצמתה כל, 'You annihilate all who are untrue to You', where הצמתה takes the place of A. This narrative is about an unworthy student called Doeg, who spoke evil of others. The context is narrative.¹⁶⁶ Yet a third application is found in Exod. R. 3.13 concerning Moses.

b. R. Hash. 33b

In b. R. Hash. 33b, the length and type of blasts for New Year is discussed, scrutinizing the quality and length of each type of blast (following m. R. Hash. 4.9). In this connection, the sort of blast a *terua* is appears to be controversial:

שיעור תרועה כשלש יבבות והתניא שיעור תרועה כשלשה שברים אמר אביי בהא ודאי פליגי דכתיב יום תרועה יהיה לכם ומתרגמין יום יבבא יהא לכון וכתיב באימיה דסיסרא בעד החלון נשקפה ותיבב אם סיסרא מר סבר גנוחי גנח ומר סבר ילולי ליל 'The length of the *terua* is equal to three *ye'avot*'. But it has been taught: The length of the *terua* is equal to three *shevarim*? Said Abaye, This is an obvious conflict, since it is written, 'It will be a day of *terua* to you' (Num. 29.1), and we translate, 'It will be a day of *ye'ava* to you',¹⁶⁷ and it is written of Sisera's mother, "Through the window she looked forth, ותיבב"¹⁶⁸ (Jud. 5.28). One master believed [that this means] 'throbbing', and another master believed [that it means] 'howling'.

Abaye refers to the translation which is found in TgOnq Num. 29.1 (and TgPsJ), followed by a Hebrew etymological parallel of *ye'ava*. The two prooftexts do not concern the meaning of *shevarim* (שברים), but illuminate the semantic meaning of *ye'ava* (יבבא). Thus the quotations confirm that the sound of the *terua* has the quality of a *ye'ava*, but this quality is questioned by the prooftext of Jud. 5.28. That the difference of opinion is related to the meaning of the lexeme *ye'ava* is made explicit in mS Rab108: מר סבר האי ותיבב ילולי הוא ומר סבר גנוחי הוא, 'One master believed that this [word] ותיבב means "howling", and another master believed it means

¹⁶⁶ A parallel occurs in Midr. Ps. 18.32 (Buber), which is based on these traditions.

¹⁶⁷ So Mun95, Ox23, Rab1608, Pes1511 and Vilna; Lon400 reads יבבא, Mun140 reads יבבא, Vat134 reads יבבא.

¹⁶⁸ The meaning of this verb is 'yell', see Smelik, Targum of Judges, p. 477 n. 840.

“throbbing”¹⁶⁹. Ultimately, Abbahu established the practice to sound the horn according to both interpretations (b. R. Hash. 34a).

It is worthy of note that the introduction ‘as we translate’ is an essential part of Abaye’s direct speech, whose argument would not work without the translation. The targum agrees with TgOnq and TgPsJ, while TgNeof offers a peculiar fuzzy translation with יום תקועה דשופר ויבבו יהווי לכו. In its margin, this whole phrase has been replaced by דיבבו יהווי לכו... which essentially agrees with TgOnq. The marginal reading in TgNeof identifies יום תקועה דשופר as a plus.¹⁷⁰ Since TgPsJ had Onqelos traditions, it is fair to assume that Abaye cites Onqelos at this point.

The Aramaic interpretation is cited to define the lexical meaning of the word יבבא. The equivalence of תרועה and יבבא only confirms the mishna to an extent, because the juxtaposition with Jud. 5.28 raises questions about the semantic value of יבבא which are deemed to support the *baraita*’s שברים.

It is worthy of note that other citations, which might have been invoked, do not occur: here, the targumic interpretation of ותיבב in TgJon Jud. 5.28 as ‘and she peered’ is conspicuously absent. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that Abaye, who studied under Rav Yoseph, was aware of TgJon but ignored it,¹⁷¹ what does this tell us about the rabbinic use of Aramaic translations? TgJon’s version is based on an acute reading of the verse in its setting within the Song of Debora: Sisera’s mother is still unaware of her son’s fate who died between Jael’s legs. While she fears the worst, her servants attempt to comfort her. TgJon highlights her anxiety. The Talmudic interpretations, on the other hand, waver between anxiety and grief, with one master reading a mother’s heart-felt groan of deep anxiety and the other reading a mother’s loud and crying wail about

¹⁶⁹ Muni40 agrees, but refers to the lemma by אמיה דיסירא. The order of interpretations here is reversed in all other witnesses, as in Ox23 מר סבר גנוחי גנח ומר סבר ילולי יליל (Lon400, Mun95, Vat134, Rab1608, Pes1511 and Vilna), yet without any consequence.

¹⁷⁰ See Levy, *Targum Neophyti* I, II, p. 161. I do not believe that the circellus intends the reading יבבו יהווי לכו, as McNamara suggests; McNamara, *Targum Neofiti* I: Numbers, p. 156 n. b (contrast Levy). The plus of יום תקועה דשופר in TgNeof confirms the tradition that the shofar should be used; cf. J. Milgrom, *Numbers* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. 246.

¹⁷¹ Since Deborah’s Song is a *hafara*, the possibility that no Aramaic translation of this verse was known is minimal. Such translations may have been known in oral form only. Conversely, it cannot be taken for granted that the extant reading of TgJon Jud. 5.28 was that current in the early Amoraic period. However, had the translation conformed to the current meaning of יבב as ‘yell’, it would have made sense to cite the translation.

her lost child. Exegetically, the first interpretation is not so far removed from that in TgJon, but lexically the Targum had nothing to offer here. TgJon epitomizes a narrative interest in its translational strategy whereas the Talmud focuses on the semantics of the lexeme, here in terms of vocal quality, corresponding to its own topical interest.

Lexical and Phonetic Interests

To round off the quotations advanced by named sages, the interest is generally of a lexical nature. In b. Shab. 10b Rav cites (a translation identical to) TgOnq to confirm that the word 'faithful' is an attribute of God, not a substitute name, and may therefore be used in greetings. Other translations define *realia*, like the value of the 'gerah' (גרה),¹⁷² or have a phonetic twist, which is well-attested in rabbinic hermeneutics, including the version of Aquila.¹⁷³ In b. Ḥul. 139b and b. Meg. 10b the Bavli cites TgOnq Exod. 30.23 because its wording is phonetically similar to the name of Mordechai. In b. Ḥul. 139b, כרור מר דכתיב מן התורה מנין דכתיב מירא דכיא 'Where is Mordecai indicated in the Tora? As it is written, "Flowing myrrh" (Exod. 30.23), which we translate "מירא דכיא [pure myrrh]"'. In b. Meg. 10b this phonetic pun is used to name Mordechai 'the chief of all spices'. The spelling varies; TgOnq has the (Yemenite) reading מורא דכיא; some Talmudic copyists increased the similarity by the variant form מר דכי.¹⁷⁴ In b. B. Qam. 116b the translation plays a part in oral variant readings of the Mishna. Following the mishna, fields are seized by either מסיקין (as our current texts of the Mishna read)¹⁷⁵ or מציקין, with R. Naḥman b. Yisḥaq arguing that neither is in error, finding evidence for the existence of both. The former reading is based on the way 'we translate' Deut. 28.42¹⁷⁶ with a reference to סקאה 'locust', relevant on the back of the supposed etymological relationship between מסיקין and סקאה, as well as

¹⁷²b. Bek. 50a. The same Hebrew-Aramaic equivalence of Exod. 30.13 occurs in MT/TgOnq Lev. 27.25; Num. 3.47; 18.16; cf. TgJon Ezek. 45.12.

¹⁷³See below, p. 388 and following.

¹⁷⁴b. Ḥul. 139b: Vat122, Vat123 מר דכי; Ox2666 מרדכי; Vat121, Mun95, Vilna מורא דכיא. b. Meg. 10b: Gött, ColX, Mun95, Pes1516 מר דכי (Mun95 could be written מרדכי); Lon400, Vat134 מירא דכיא; Mun140 מור; Ox23 מורא דכיא; Vilna מרי דכי.

¹⁷⁵With (Kaufman A50) or without (Mun95, Flor) the definite article.

¹⁷⁶Ham165 inverts the order of מציקין and מסיקין. The word סקאה occurs in Sokoloff and Yahalom, *שירת בני מערבא*, no. 36 l. 59.

the topic of dispossession. The targum is targeted at the Mishna, but not at the Scriptures, as is not uncommon.¹⁷⁷

Anonymous afterthoughts

In eight instances, the citation marked ‘as we translate’ is narrated by the anonymous voice. Apart from b. R. Hash. 22b, where the citation does not occur in most manuscripts,¹⁷⁸ and the citation of Isa. 41.16 in the parallel passage of b. A. Zar. 44a, both of which are evidently late insertions to the topic discussed, there are six further citations in which the Aramaic translation cited is a passenger rather than a driver and may be labelled an ‘anonymous afterthought’,¹⁷⁹ with one exception, which will be my first example below. The term ‘anonymous afterthought’ is intended to signal that a translation has been latched onto the discussion without necessarily being an indispensable element in its unfolding argument—in some cases, the Hebrew texts cited settle the point to which its translation does not add anything new.¹⁸⁰

b. M. Qat. 2a

The citation discussed here concerns an editorial superscription. The opening of tractate Moed Qatan deals with the issue how agricultural plots of land may be watered during a festival week or in a sabbatical year. In this framework, two Aramaic translations are quoted to define an irrigated plot and a fertile, that is non-irrigated, plot. The first one establishes the meaning of an irrigated plot (b. M. Qat. 2a):

ומאי משמע דהאי בית השלחין¹⁸¹ לישנא דצחותא היא¹⁸² דכתיב ואתה עין ויגע ומתרגמינן ואת¹⁸³ משלחי¹⁸⁴ ולא¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷ See also b. R. Hash. 22b; b. Pes. 68a; b. Yom. 32b; b. B. Qam. 3b.

¹⁷⁸ See above, p. 350.

¹⁷⁹ This label resembles the category of ‘afterthought’ in A. Samely, ‘Notes on the Sequencing of Information in Mishna Tractates’, *FJB* 35 (2009), pp. 19–64, as Alex Samely pointed out to me. He defines and describes this phenomenon with much more acuity than will be attempted here, but also from a different, more synchronic perspective.

¹⁸⁰ See b. B. Qam. 38a; b. Nid. 31b in addition to b. A. Zar. 44a and b. R. Hash. 22b.

¹⁸¹ Ox23 reads בית השלחין, ColX, Ox23, Vatio8, Vatr34 for שלחין בית השלחין.

¹⁸² Gött, Mun95, ColX, Ox23, Vatio8, Vatr34, Lon400, Pes1515 support Vilna’s היא.

¹⁸³ Only Pes1515 and Vilna read ואת; Vatio8 reads והוא.

¹⁸⁴ Gött, Vatio8 read משלחי; Pes1515 נשלחי.

¹⁸⁵ ColX, Vatio8, Vatr34 do not read ולא (so Gött, Lon400, Mun95, Ox23, Pes1515, Vilna).

And what indicates that this [term] ‘an irrigated field’ is an expression of ‘thirst’? For it is written, ‘when you were tired and weary’ (Deut. 25.18), and we translate, ‘when you were tired (משלהי) and worn out’.¹⁸⁶

The translation is literal and at first sight may not shed any semantic light on the Hebrew lexeme it translates (עיר), but since the pronunciation of the ח is weakened in Babylonian Aramaic, the Aramaic translation משלהי did appear to be etymologically related to the Hebrew השלחין of the mishnaic question (two manuscripts actually read משלחי, two others השלהין and שלהין). The tiredness of a field is a metaphor for its dryness, hence ‘thirst’. The relevant relationship between the mishnaic lexeme and the Aramaic equivalent of another Hebrew lexeme is not translational, but etymological, with the meaning of the biblical verse transferred to the Mishna by way of the Aramaic translation. This anonymous comment is immediately followed by another one:

ומאי משמע דהאי בית הבעל לישנא דמייתבותא היא¹⁸⁷ דכתיב כי יבעל בחור בתולה ומתרגמינן ארי כמה דמיתותב עולם עם בתולתא¹⁸⁸ יתייתבון¹⁸⁹ בגיך¹⁹⁰ בנייך¹⁹¹
And what indicates that this [term] ‘Baal’s plot’ is an expression of ‘fertilization’? For it is written, ‘As¹⁹² a young man espouses a young woman, your sons shall espouse you’ (Isa. 62.5), and we translate, ‘As a young man settles with a young woman, your sons will settle down among you’.

A Baal’s plot is an old term for a fertile piece of land, which the anonymous voice explains by the metaphor of marriage, בעל, in Isa. 62.5—or, as b. Taan. 6b states, מיטרא בעלה דארעא ‘rain is the impregnator of the soil’. The Aramaic translation identifies the aspect of marriage and sexual consummation of the Hebrew lexeme, which is correctly transferred to the meaning of a בית הבעל.¹⁹³ On the other hand, the translation is hardly necessary to make the point, as the Hebrew on its own adequately

¹⁸⁶ So TgOnq; TgNeof and TgPsJ use the same lexeme but in the plural.

¹⁸⁷ Gött, Mun95, ColX, Ox23, Vatr08, Vatr34 והיא; Lon400, Pes1515, Vilna היא.

¹⁸⁸ Mun95 עולמתא, Vatr34 עולימתא; Lon400 בתולתא.

¹⁸⁹ Gött יתיתבון; Lon400 יתייבון; Mun95 יתותבין; Ox23 יתייבון; Vatr08 יתיתבון; Vatr34 יתיתבון בנייך בגיך בנייך. ColX has a minus for בנייך.

¹⁹⁰ Gött, Ox23 בגיכי.

¹⁹¹ Gött בנייכי, Lon400 בנייכי כי; Mun95, Ox23, Vatr34 בנייכי; Vatr08 בנכי.

¹⁹² According to Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background*, pp. 320–21, 348, כי has the meaning ‘like’ here; cf. 1QIsa^a כיא כבעל.

¹⁹³ Cf. S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie* (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1910), II p. 546 n. 115. The preceding verse would appear as relevant since Isa. 62.4 mentions that as a result of God’s

expressed these elements by its reference to a man espousing a woman, but it nicely complements the explanations given.

The *gemara*, then, identifies one plot as dry land and the other as fertilized land, but how do these quotations fit in the structure of the *gemara*? The commentary begins with a question about the wording of the first *mishna* which deals with the issue how plots of land may be watered during a festival week or in a sabbatical year. According to the *mishna*, irrigated fields may be watered from any spring, whether newly emerging or previously existing, but not from stored rainwater, swipe-wells or by making small trenches around the stems of a vine. The *gemara* focuses on an apparent redundancy in the *mishna*.¹⁹⁴ Why mention existing springs after dealing with new ones, which would seem to pose the more serious problem?¹⁹⁵ The anonymous voice infers from this mention that the *Mishna* seeks to rule out both old and new springs for watering a different type of land: the non-irrigated, fertile plot.

The *gemara* continues with the passages cited above that offer a definition of terms. All these first paragraphs are anonymous from השתא until אמר רב הונא and they relate to a number of following statements, which are no longer anonymous, as an editorial framework that anticipates the conclusion that a non-irrigated, fertile plot may not be watered from any spring. When the *gemara* relates attributed statements, we learn that R. Meir in fact held that even such plots might be watered from any spring, whilst others held intermediate positions. Moreover, the *Mishna* never even mentions the הבעל; these terms only occur later on in the *gemara*. The elements of semi-conclusive pre-emption and anonymity suggest that what we have here is an editorial introduction, not uncommon in the opening stages of a tractate, which suggests that these paragraphs belong to the latest strata of the *Bavli*.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, it is in the nature of the technical talmudic expression מאי משמע that it adds information to a

delight with Israel 'your land will be espoused' (וארצך תבעל), which TgJon translates וארעיק תתיבת 'your land will be settled down upon'.

¹⁹⁴Except for ms Vat134, which does not have the whole passage from מיבעיא until אימא (דלא אתי לאינפולי triggered by the repetition of לאינפולי). ms Lon400 omits the part from לא שנה מעיין until לא הבעל.

¹⁹⁵Newly emerging springs may break up the soil and make repair work of the trenches necessary. Whether the *mishna* has anything like this in view cannot be confirmed.

¹⁹⁶A. Weiss, *על היצירה הספרותית של האמוראים* (New York: Horeb, 1962), pp. 8–11, 16; Cohen, *Rereading Talmud*, p. 164.

current argument, glossing a mishnaic *halakha* with an explanation based on a biblical verse. As a consequence, the quotations from TgOnq and TgJon are late ‘afterthoughts’, although given some prominence here.

TgJon’s text differs in some details from that printed in the Vilna edition, which—somewhere in its genealogy—may well have been corrected after TgJon. Where TgJon reads בתולה, the Ashkenazi and Italian manuscripts of b. M. Qat. 2a have ע(ו)למתא instead,¹⁹⁷ while the Yemenite and Sefardi ones support בתולתא.¹⁹⁸ Lon400 conflates both readings with עולימתא בתולתא, which typically occurs when a copyist inserts a marginal reading, scribbled by a later hand, into the text because he thinks it represents an omission.¹⁹⁹ TgJon’s standard translation of MT’s בתולה is invariably בתולתא;²⁰⁰ there would seem to be no apparent reason to assume a deviation from this pattern here. On the other hand, the possibility cannot be excluded that a copyist of the talmudic tractate corrected the Aramaic equivalent to a more literal representation of the Hebrew which precedes it.²⁰¹

b. Hul. 80a

Several times Targum Onqelos or Targum Jonathan are invoked for their lexical or semantic relevance, as in the classification of the תאו ‘wild ox’ as a cattle animal instead of a wild species. The text of b. Hul. 80a according to MS Ham169 reads as follows:²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ So Mun95, Vat134 (and, partially, Lon400). Minor variant readings occur in both the Bavli and TgJon, mostly in morphology.

¹⁹⁸ Apart from the Vilna edn, ColX, Gött and Vatro8—and partially Lon400.

¹⁹⁹ See W.F. Smelik, ‘Trouble in the Trees: Variant Selection and Tree Construction Illustrated by the Texts of Targum Judges’, *ArSt* 1.2 (2003), pp. 247–85 (reprinted in P. van Reenen, A. den Hollander and M. van Mulken [eds], *Studies in Stemmatology* 2 [Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004], pp. 167–206), pp. 263–64 and n. 54; p. 281. Some additional examples in Smelik, *Targum of Judges*, pp. 501 n. 1030; 610 n. 1689; 618; 629.

²⁰⁰ See TgJon Jud. 19.24; 21.12; 2 Sam. 13.2, 18; 1 Kgs 1.2; Isa. 23.4; 62.5; Jer. 2.32; 51.22; Ezek. 9.6; 44.22; Joel 1.8; Amos 8.13. The emphatic ending is attested in TgJon’s variant readings.

²⁰¹ For such inner-textual corrections in bilingual manuscript reproduction, see Smelik, ‘Orality’, pp. 76–80.

²⁰² See A. Tal, ‘The Role of Targum Onqelos in Literary Activity During the Middle Ages’, in H. Gzella and M. Folmer (eds.), *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), pp. 159–71 (160); D. Talshir, שמות בעלי החיים בתרגום (PhD thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1981), pp. 89–90.

א' ליה עד כאן לא פליגי רבנן ור' יוסי²⁰³ אלא בשור הבר דתנן שור הבר מין בהמה
 ר' יוסי אומ' מין חיה²⁰⁴ דרבנן²⁰⁵ סברי מדמתרגמי' תורבלא²⁰⁶ מין בהמה הוא²⁰⁷ ר'
 יוסי אומ' ²⁰⁸ מין חיה הוא סבר כיון דחשיב ליה בהדי חיות מין חיה נינהו
 He said to him, Our rabbis and R. Yose do not disagree other than with regard
 to the wild ox, for we have learnt, The wild ox is a species of domesticated
 animal. R. Yose says, It is a species of wild animal. Our rabbis argue that it is a
 species of domesticated animal since we translate 'the wild ox'. R. Yose says, It
 is a species of wild animal. Because it is reckoned together with [other] species
 of wild animals, he maintains that they are a species of wild animal.

The discussion focuses on the question whether the ox and the wild ox are 'diverse species' which implies certain restrictions: diverse species may not be mated with one another, may not be yoked together for ploughing the land, and the offspring of crossbreeding may not be used for sacrifice in the Temple. If the wild ox is related to the ox, as the rabbis claim, they do not constitute different species and crossbreeding is allowed. While the ox is the *bos taurus* in modern terms, the far more elusive wild ox is generally believed to have been the (now extinct) *bos primigenius*, also known as aurochs.²⁰⁹

The translation marked as 'since we translate' agrees with TgOnq Deut. 14.5's תורבלא for MT's תאו, a bovid, and would at first sight constitute an early quotation of the Targum which apparently stems from the Tannaitic period. In fact, the quotation is later. Not only is the argumentative style similar to the *stam* who sustains the positions with arguments, but the quotation and the discussion stand in marked contrast to y. Kil. 8.6, 31c:

²⁰³ Ham169, supported by Vat122, inverts the order: רבנן ור' יוסי.

²⁰⁴ Vat121 and Vat122 have a plus following here: הוא.

²⁰⁵ Mun95, Vat121, Vat122 and Son1489 read דתניא for Ham169 and Vilna's דתנן.

²⁰⁶ Vat121 has the error תורכלא.

²⁰⁷ Vat122 reads נינהו for הוא.

²⁰⁸ For סבר מדחשיב אומ' מין חיה הוא סבר כיון דחשיב, Vat122 reads אומ' מין חיה הוא סבר; Mun95 מדחשיב אומ' מין חיה הוא סבר; Son1489 and Vilna חשיב סבר.

²⁰⁹ The aurochs was once considered a different species but is nowadays ranked as a subspecies together with the *bos taurus*. Whether the שור הבר was the aurochs or a different animal from the bovid family remains uncertain. The identification of the תאו, known to have been considered the wild ox in rabbinic literature (see below), with the ορυξ *leucoryx*, an antelope, cannot have been shared by the rabbis, as the ox and this Arabian oryx are easily distinguished. On the identification of the תאו with the תייל in the Samaritan Targum, see Talshir, שמות בעלי החיים, pp. 252–53 (cf. pp. 98, 170).

שור בר מין בהמה כול' רבנין אמרין מיכא הוה וערק לתמן רבי יוסי או' עיקריה²¹⁰
 מן תמן הוה הא²¹¹ שור עם שור בר אינן כלאים דלא כר' יוסה דר' יוסה אמ' כלאים
 ואילין דמתרגמין ותורי בר ורמנן כר' יוסה

'A wild ox is a species of domesticated animal' etc. (m. Kil. 8.6). The rabbis say, It was from here but escaped there. R. Yose says, Its roots were from there. Accordingly, [the ruling that] an ox [paired] with a wild ox do not constitute mixed species does not follow R. Yose, for R. Yose said, [They are] mixed species. And those who translate 'wild ox and wild ox [aurochs and wild bull:]' are of the opinion of Rabbi Yose.

The rabbis argue that the wild ox 'was from here but escaped there', hence it was domesticated but became wild, whereas R. Yose maintains that the wild ox originated 'from there', hence belongs essentially to the group of wild animals. It follows that R. Yose does not consider the ox and wild ox to be related to one another, which is supported by those who translate ותורי בר ורימנן. This translation can be found in TgNeof to Deut. 14.5 for MT's תאו. On that account, the Yerushalmi cites a Palestinian Targum and the Bavli the 'Babylonian' Targum. While this division cannot be denied, there is more to these translations than catches the eye. Since ותורי בר is the etymological origin of TgOnq's ותרבלא (< תור ברא), there is no semantic difference between them as far as their take on the Hebrew noun תאו goes. But there are other differences between the Bavli and Yerushalmi, and one rare similarity, which require explanation.

The Yerushalmi cites ותורי בר ורימנן as the translation of two species in a word order that agrees with TgNeof only:

MT	איל	וצבי	ויחמור	ואקו	ודישן	ותאו	וזמר
TgOnq	אילא	וטביא	ויחמורא	ועלא	ורימא	ותורבלא	ודיצא
TgPsJ	אילין	וטביין	ויחמורין	יעלין	ורימנן	ותורי בר	ודיצין
TgNeof	איילין	וטביין	ויחמורין	וין[אלין	ודייצין	ותורי בר	ורימאנן
y. Kil. 8.6						ותורי בר	וראמנן
Pesh	אילא מלכא מלכא מלכא מלכא. אילא מלכא מלכא						

²¹⁰In MS Scal3, the scribe wrote עורקה, corrected by a second hand into עיקריה; the reading in the Krotoschin edn is preferable and followed in this instance.

²¹¹While הא is supported by MSS Scal3, Vat133, the editio princeps and Krotoschin, the reading תנא is supported in the commentaries of Eliyya b. Loeb Foulda and the Vilna Gaon Foulda while that of Serillo supports דאמר.

TgNeof reads *וְדִישָׁן וְתוֹרִי בֵּר וְרִמְאָנִין* with *וְדִישָׁן* and *וְרִמְאָנִין* changing places over against TgOnq and TgPsJ. What is the reason for TgNeof's inversion? Since both the *דִישָׁן* and the *זֵמֶר* are not attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but generally considered to be part of the bovid family, the reason for the order in TgNeof remains elusive. There certainly is no obvious connection to R. Yose's opinion; rather, it may simply represent a different identification of these wild animals, just as Pesh identifies MT *תָּאוּ* as the *הַשְׂעִירִי* 'wild she-goat' whereas it equates *דִישָׁן* to *זֵמֶר* 'wild bull, buffalo'—assuming Pesh does not (a) twist the sequence or (b) reflect a variant Hebrew sequence. In a further twist, the thrust of the argument in y. Kil. 8.6, 31c is in the opposite direction: the translation supports R. Yose, whereas in the Bavli the quoted translation supports 'our rabbis'. How can these contradictory claims be explained?

All this raises the question how the translation *וְתוֹרְבֵּלָא* supports the argument that the *שׁוֹר הֶבֶר* 'wild ox' is a domesticated animal (Bavli), or *וְרִמְאָנִין* that the ox is a wild animal (Yerushalmi). Since all animals listed in Deut. 14.5 are undomesticated bovids, each translation of Deut. 14.5 would tend to support R. Yose; indeed, even TgOnq's translation of *תָּאוּ* with *וְתוֹרְבֵּלָא* confirms the fact that the wild ox is ranked among the wild animals. Whatever the precise species under discussion, there is no semantic evidence for the claim that only TgNeof supports R. Yose or that TgOnq contradicts his views. Yet the necessary conditions for either opinion are not present in these quotations. What would really support R. Yose is any translation that cites the ox and the wild ox as different species in one breath, but since the *שׁוֹר הֶבֶר* does not occur in MT, such a biblical translation cannot be found.

So what do 'those who translate' actually translate? Neither the Bavli nor the Yerushalmi cite the biblical lexeme before they provide their translations, which is extremely rare.²¹² All other instances where the source text fails to be provided concern interpretations of a halakhic difficulty rather than Bible translations. At this juncture we need to recall the different meanings of *תִּרְגַּם* as 'translate' and 'interpret'. It follows that these translations may not be directly related to Deut. 14.5 at all; that their

²¹² On only one occasion the Hebrew lemma is cited before the translation: b. A. Zar. 44a, as discussed above, p. 347. No Hebrew lexemes are given under circumstances which are likewise suspect: b. Sot. 48b, but there are frequently situations in which the lexeme is not formally cited but assumed.

translations happen to agree with respectively TgNeof and TgOnq Deut. 14.5 does not prove anything. In the context of the Yerushalmi, those who ‘translate’ provide a halakhic interpretation in Aramaic of the core terms in the discussion. Therefore the translation quoted in the Yerushalmi is most probably an interpretation of שור ושור בר that qualifies both types of wild oxen as separate wild species, as ורימאנין implies. Only now it becomes transparent why the Yerushalmi cites two translations.

What would support the rabbis is any translation that does not identify the תאו and the שור הבר ‘wild ox’, but relates the ‘wild ox’ to the domesticated ox. To appreciate this point, we need to turn to t. Kil. 1.9:

חמשה דברים נאמרו בשור הבר ... ר' יוסי אומ' זהו תאו הכתוב בתורה ... וחכמים אומ' תאו בריא לעצמו שור הבר בריא לעצמו

Five things were said concerning the wild ox ... R. Yose says, This is the *teo* which is written in the Tora ... But sages say, *teo* is a creature unto itself, and the wild ox is a creature unto itself.²¹³

R. Yose argues two things: The ox and the wild ox are not related, and the *teo* of Deut. 14.5 is the wild ox. The sages, on the other hand, must reject the identification of the *teo* with the wild ox because they maintain that the wild ox is related to the ox. That is difficult in the case of the *teo*, which is listed among the species of kosher wild animals as a species distinct from the domesticated ox. Support is not forthcoming from TgOnq, which represents the *teo* with the תורבלא ‘wild ox’, the literal equivalent of the שור הבר. Since TgOnq shares the classification of R. Yose in understanding the *teo* as a ‘wild ox’, the translation in the Bavli does not support ‘our rabbis’.

So what are we to make of the quotation in the Bavli? Although the translation contradicts its argument, its quotation is supported by our textual witnesses. I can think of two plausible scenarios. If the Bavli had a Palestinian source—it cites Tannaitic opinions—the element of translation may have been inherited and updated to reflect TgOnq in the process, without understanding the full impact of this change. Although such instances do occur, it seems to me that an alternative interpretation is preferable. The translation of TgOnq may have been added on the grounds that the תור of Deut. 14.4 and the תורבלא = תור ברא of 14.5 are obviously related animals as they share the lexeme תור. On that understanding, no

²¹³R. Yose's identification of תאו and שור הבר is also attested in Sifre Deut. 100. An anonymous opinion in t. Kil. 1.8 regards the ox and the wild ox as mixed species, which is not recorded in the parallel of m. Kil. 1.6.

matter how elliptically presented, TgOnq indeed supports the view of the rabbis. But those who added or updated the quotation must have been unaware of the tradition that the 'rabbis' rejected the identification that underlies תורבלא.

b. Git. 68a–b

Another anonymous afterthought is found in b. Git. 68a–b, which offers a long narrative about Solomon's quest for an unknown species, the *shamir*, and his dealings with the king of demons, Ashmedai. At one point in the story about the *shamir*, this mythical creature is entrusted to the wild cock who put it upon a mountain peak, which splits open (because that is what the *shamir* does: no hard object can withstand it).²¹⁴ In this context, a translation is quoted:

ומאי עביד ליה ממטי ל' לטורא דלית להו יישוב ומנח ל' אשינא דטורא ופקע טורא
ונקט ומייתי ביורני מאילני ושדי התם וקדחי והיינו דקא מתרגם נגר טורא
And what does [the wild cock] do with it, [the *shamir*]? It carries it to the moun-
tains that lack vegetation, and places it on the mountain peak, whereupon the
mountain cracks open.²¹⁵ He gathers and brings seeds from trees, sows there,
and they germinate.²¹⁶ That is why we translate²¹⁷ 'mountain cleaver' (Lev.
11.19/Deut. 14.18).²¹⁸

Highly unusual for a marked scriptural translation, the text does not in any way indicate which Hebrew words are translated.²¹⁹ Perhaps this explains why MS Vat140 includes the words 'this is why we translate' without the translation itself,²²⁰ or why Mun95 places the translation at a different position in the text, after 'mountain peak'. We can work it out backwards

²¹⁴For this creature, see b. Sot. 48b; m. Av. 5.8; m. Sot. 9.12; t. Sot. 15.1; y. Sot. 9.12, 24b; Mek. 6 ויסע (5 in edn., Horovitz-Rabin; p. 171); Sifre Deut. 355; ARN B 38; Tan. וירא 23; TgPsJ Num. 22.28. Cf. I. Löw, *Fauna und Mineralien der Juden* (Hildesheim: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), pp. 255–56.

²¹⁵In Mun95, the clause ונקט ומייתי ביורני מאילני ושדי הת' וקדחי follows the translation, but in other witnesses it precedes the translation (with variants).

²¹⁶The reading וקדחי in Vat130, Vat140, Mun95 and Baz (וקרחי) is preferable to וישוב והוי in TS Fr(1)31, Son1488 and Vilna.

²¹⁷I follow the reading דמתרגמינן והיינו in Mun95, Vat140, TS Fr(1)31, Baz, Son1488 and Vilna for Vat130's דקא מתרגם נגר טורא.

²¹⁸The translation, נגר טורא, is a minus in Vat140.

²¹⁹So Vilna and mss Vat130, Vat140, Mun95; the same applies to the citations in Midr. Ps. 78.12 (Buber) and b. Zev. 54a.

²²⁰וקדחי והיינו דמתרגמינן.

by looking in TgOnq, where נגר טורא occurs in Lev. 11.19 and Deut. 14.18 for Hebrew דוכיפת ‘hoopoe’ or ‘wild peacock’;²²¹ the same translation is attested in TgNeof and TgPsJ. Indeed, Midr. Ps. 78.12, citing this tradition, reads נגר טורא דוכיפת דמתרגמינן דוכיפת נגר טורא ‘that is why we translate “wild peacock” [as] “mountain cleaver”’. Valid as this reconstruction may appear, the ‘wild peacock’ does not feature in the sugya, although there is a reason for this absence. The gemara assumes the identification of the onomatopoeia דוכיפת with the תרנגולא ברא ‘wild peacock’, which was common in Syriac (Pesh ܐܘܬܪܢܓܘܠܐ ܒܪܐ). The comment ‘as we translate’ explains why TgOnq (or ‘we’) does not represent the דוכיפת with תרנגולא ברא as might perhaps have been expected; the focus is not so much on what ‘we translate’ but how. Etiologically, the interpretation ‘mountain cleaver’ highlights how the wild peacock made clever use of the shamir to crack the mountain top. Despite this etiological connection the Aramaic lexeme טורא is more accurately translated as ‘wild’ in this compound,²²² and נגר טור either means ‘wild peacock’ or ‘woodpecker’. The identification is therefore one of dialect; apart from Syriac, the compound תרנגולא ברא occurs only in JBA and Late Aramaic,²²³ whereas the Samaritan Targum translates דוכיפת נגר טורא like the Palestinian Targums and TgOnq.²²⁴

All these observations mark the tradition how ‘we translate’ as something of an afterthought on two different Aramaic equivalents of a Hebrew lexeme that itself does not feature in the narrative. The etiology expands on the story’s motif of a mythical animal that cracks open mountain peaks, but instead of explaining the narrative in which the etiology-translation is embedded, it sheds light on the way ‘we translate’, which we may equate with TgOnq. There is nothing unusual about digressions in the Bavli, but it is, in this case, still telling about the way translations are viewed and used. The targum does not serve its usual auxillary role but has itself

²²¹For דוכיפת, see L. Köhler, ‘Problems in the Study of the Language of the Old Testament’, JSS 1 (1956), pp. 1–24 (14).

²²²For the meaning of טורא, see Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 222 meaning 2; p. 341. He leaves the identity of the bird open, which is unhelpful; in DJBA the bird is missing altogether.

²²³See TgPss 50.11; 80.14; TgJob 3.7; 38.36; 39.13; TgEst-I 3.7; TgEst-II 1.3.

²²⁴Tal, A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic, II, p. 548. It is possible that the element נגר refers to woodpecking; cf. Lev. R. (quoted by Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 341): חד נגר טור הוה (נפא אטלא). Alternatively, it could refer to the length of the cockscomb—in which case ‘wild peacock’ is an acceptable translation. See further D. Talshir, שמות בעלי החיים של השמונים, pp. 144–48.

become the object of study. The lack of a Hebrew source text for the translation, the variation of position, and the omission of actual translation may strengthen the impression that this explanation was at some point in time latched onto an existing narrative framework.

As quoted in the Midrashim

There are a handful of cases in Amoraic Midrashim which cite TgOnq under the Babylonian formula 'as we translate' (מתרגמינן), which signals a later hand in early Jewish Palestinian documents because of the enclitic pronoun on the participle. In addition to the Babylonian marker itself, the manuscript evidence casts serious doubt on their authenticity. Several of these are found in the the *editio princeps* of Midrash Lamentations Rabba but not attested in the manuscript edited by Buber.²²⁵ The same argument applies to a quotation from TgOnq Deut. 24.20, cited in Lam. R. 1.13, which is introduced by תרגומו 'its translation'.²²⁶ Three citations are marked by the header ומתרגמינן, a term otherwise known from the Bavli, while the quotations, of Exod. 14.7 and Deut. 29.9, in 3.1 (both verses) and 3.10 (the latter) agree with TgOnq. All this marks them as late supplements to a work which is characterized by Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, not TgOnq's markedly different Jewish Literary Aramaic.

A similar explanation is true for targumic quotations in Gen. R. marked as דמתרגמינן, as in 8.1 (Albeck, p. 55) which do not occur in the MSS. In 43.9, a translation of Num. 15.38 is introduced as חוטא דתכלתא ומתרגמינן חוטא, but in MS Vat30 these words are not attested, while in MS Stut32 the marker ומתרגמינן is absent. Nor do these translations add any substance to the hermeneutic operations in these units, with perhaps the sole exception of the very first quotation, in Gen. R. 1.1, where the translation of Nah. 3.8 plays a part in an exposition built upon the word 'amon (אמון), but its argument is common knowledge—the identification of No with Alexandria was so standard that the Aramaic translation could be regarded as a postscript.

Finally, one occurrence in Leviticus Rabba is likewise representative of late glossing. One occurs in Lev. R. 33.6, which cites TgOnq under the header תרגום, however the relevant words only occur in the editions,

²²⁵ MS Cas4. See S. Buber, מדרש איכה רבה (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), p. 122 n. ג; p. 124 n. יט. For a reference to Onqelos, see p. 388 below.

²²⁶ Buber, מדרש איכה רבה, p. 51 n. קיח.

not in the oldest manuscripts.²²⁷ With few exceptions, the verb תרגם also follows the lemma to be translated, rather than preceding it as is the case here.²²⁸ Having established its relative lateness, it must also be said that the supplementation of TgOnq—if a single word permits such an identification—follows a familiar pattern: a pre-existing text has been tagged with lexical information. The structure of these texts easily accommodates such pluses, but the translation cannot be used as historical information for rabbinic use of scriptural translations in the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods.

We may conclude that genuine, unquestionable quotations from any of the Targums, or versions identified as Aramaic translations—in contrast to Greek renderings, and (some of the) unmarked translations—are not attested in Amoraic literature. This bolsters the argument of those scholars, who claim that TgOnq and TgJon were either unknown or disregarded in Palestine until the Geonic period. That is not true in the case of the Palestinian Targums, however, even though, for different reasons, these also receive little mention.²²⁹ On the other hand, the Amoraim most certainly resorted to Aramaic or Greek in their expositions, but these ‘translations’ or lexical elucidations do not tally with our extant versions, or were not identified as translations. The ramifications of this observation will be explored below.

The core of Pesiqta de Rav Kahana is generally dated in the Byzantine period, but the Midrash has been supplemented with excerpts from other sources.²³⁰ One of these supplements, in 2.6, cites TgOnq Lev. 23.43 (with slight differences) with a notion that was widespread, not only in the Targums,²³¹ but also in the halakhic Midrashim,²³² that God sheltered the Israelites in the cloud of his Glory during the exodus. It is developed here in a homiletical style to drive home the mandatory nature of the commandment to dwell in sukkot. In the present passage, the argument

²²⁷ See M. Margulies, *מדרש ויקרא רבה* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1953–1960), pp. תשסח-תשסו.

²²⁸ The other exception is b. A. Zar. 44a, discussed above.

²²⁹ For these citations, see below, pp. 414–27.

²³⁰ For the date of and additions to Pes. K., see Lerner, ‘The Works of Aggadic Midrash’, pp. 149–51, 164.

²³¹ TgPsJ offers the same translation; TgNeof has the same notion but worded differently: בעננין היך מטלין; בענני איקר שכינתי בדמות מטלין; TgCG reads בעננין היך מטלין.

²³² Sifra אמור 17.11; Mek. בשלח 1 (p. 80); b. Suk. 11b.

entirely depends on the Aramaic translation, which reflects an exegesis of several verses (Isa. 4.6; Exod. 12.37), but as the unit is presumably a late addition, the function of the Targum as the pivot of the midrash cannot be projected into the Byzantine period, let alone earlier. A further quotation in Pes. K. 26.5, although attested in all witnesses used by Mandelbaum,²³³ is bracketed by Braude in his English translation as a later supplement to the Midrash.²³⁴

In the late Midrashim marked quotations of TgOnq occur predominantly in Numbers Rabba²³⁵ and the Midrash to Psalms. The latter two are generally dated to the Islamic period, even if they may recycle older materials on occasion. Their testimony for the pre-Islamic period is unsafe before certain patterns have been established. Quite a few examples could be cited from these two Midrashim,²³⁶ but they do not add any further to the picture that has already been established. By all accounts, we have now arrived in a period in which the extant Targums were well-known, circulating beyond their original more restricted domain, and deemed acceptable as a source for aggadic purposes. The contrast with the Amoraic, let alone the Tannaitic period, could not be starker.

8.4 Rabbinic quotations of Aquila's translation

Rabbinic literature quotes fourteen or fifteen different translations in the name of Aquila, named as a proselyte from Pontus who flourished in the first half of the second century CE.²³⁷ Ten (or eleven) of these are cited in transliterated Greek (with corruptions as is evident from parallel

²³³B. Mandelbaum, כהנא דרב פסיקתא (2 vols.; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), II, p. 392.

²³⁴W.G. Braude and I.J. Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 401.

²³⁵A quotation in Num. R. 10.9 has a Tanna or the anonymous voice citing TgOnq Exod. 28.34 after the Babylonian marker ומתרגמינן 'and as we translate'. Num. R. 13.14 has an indisputable quotation from TgOnq Deut. 32.14 with the same marker; in this verse TgPsJ fuses TgOnq with a more literal version, and TgNeof has a non-metaphorical understanding unlike TgOnq's translation. Num. R. 14.1 offers a quotation that (with minor variant readings) agrees with TgJon Isa. 11.14, introduced as ומתרגמינן.

²³⁶Num. R. 9.45; 9.48; Midr. Pss. 18.7, 34; 24.3; 48.5; 56.2; 60.2; 76.3; 77.1; 78.9, 12; 81.7; 110.5.

²³⁷The case of Cant. R. 1.3, which cites Ps. 68.26, otherwise resembles the traditions citing Ps. 48.15 (y. Meg. 2.3, 73b; y. M. Qat. 3.7, 83b; Lev. R. 11.9; Qoh. R. 1.11).

transmission), three in Hebrew, and one in Aramaic; all of these found in the Yerushalmi and the Midrashim, but not in the Bavli. Whereas references to TgOnq in the Midrashim are either late supplements, as we have seen, or attested in the Midrashim dated to the post-Byzantine era, more than 75 per cent of the Aquila-citations are found in the Yerushalmi and the Amoraic Midrashim. In one case, the name Aquila has been replaced by its Aramaic equivalent Onkelos (Lam. R. 1.1 *editio princeps*; Buber's edn reads 'Aquila'). Such instances are not uncommon in rabbinic literature, and may have been the unconscious result of well-intending scribes. Another citation attributes TgJon's version of Isa. 5.6 to Aquila (Qoh. R. 11.3), a blatant mistake in a late medieval source.²³⁸

Veltri, who offers an extensive analysis and collation of these citations,²³⁹ dissociates them from the Hexaplaric materials, with which they frequently disagree, to consider them within their rabbinic setting. In his view, the translational strategies of the rabbinic Aquila are best understood within the rabbinic study environment and, accordingly, the expression 'Aquila translated' should be read as 'how Aquila explained this verse (in the rabbinic academy)'.²⁴⁰ Whether he translates into Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew is not important; decisive is his intention to substitute exegetical meaning for the verbal one. Aquila's version performed the task of a dictionary, but despite appearances the meaning of a difficult Hebrew word or phrase was not so much derived from etymology as from an authoritative understanding of the word.²⁴¹ Polemics was not the main scope of this version, but the attempt to express the full meaning and message of the Hebrew text up to the position of the letters in the Hebrew source text, which was understood as a mystery in the words of Jerome. For Veltri, the rabbinic Aquila is a Targum because his version is inconceivable

²³⁸ Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 49.

²³⁹ Veltri does not discuss or include Pes. K. 27.9 (parallel to y. Suk. 3.5, 53d) and TanB. וישלח 30 (which is a Hebrew variant to Gen. R. 46.3); see Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', pp. 92–115 (with references to older literature); short version in Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 186–93; updated English version in G. Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and 'Canonic' Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), pp. 176–85. His reference to y. Meg. 5.4, 73b (or 2.4, 73b) is in fact to 2.3, 73b.

²⁴⁰ Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 108.

²⁴¹ Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 109. What the status of this 'authoritative understanding' may have been remains unclear, however.

without MT; conversely, the Septuagint is not, because it replaced the Hebrew source text.

To illustrate the type of translation cited in Aquila's name without rehashing Veltri's analysis in extenso, a few examples will suffice. In y. Meg. 2.3, 73b, a Greek translation is cited in the name of Aquila:

ר' ברכיה ר' חלבו עולא בירייה רבי לעזר בשם ר' חנינה עתיד הקב"ה להיעשות ראש חולה לצדיקים לעתיד לבוא מה טע' שיתו ליבכם לחילה לחולה כת' והצדיקים מראין אותו באצבע ואומ' כי זה אלהים אלהינו עולם ועד הוא ינהגנו עלמות עלמות בעלימות [בזריזות] עלמות כאילין עלמות תירגם עקילס אתא-נסייא עולם שאין בו מות והצדיקים מראין אותו באצבע ואומ' כי זה אלהים אלהינו עולם ועד הוא ינהגנו עלמות הוא ינהגנו בעולם הזה הוא ינהגנו לעתיד לבוא

Rabbi Berekya, Rabbi Ḥelbo, Ulla from Bira (?),²⁴² Rabbi Leazar in the name of Rabbi Ḥanina. In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will be made the leader of the chorus for the righteous.

What is the reason? 'Take note of its ramparts (לחילה) (Ps. 48.14), it is written 'of the chorus (לחולה)'.²⁴³

And the righteous point with their finger²⁴⁴ to him and say, 'For this is God, He is our God forever; He will lead us evermore (על מות) (Ps. 48.15).

על מות means 'vigorously' (בעלימות).²⁴⁵

על מות as those 'young girls' (עלמות) (Ps. 68.26).

Aquila translated, 'immortal' (אתא נסייא),²⁴⁶ ἀθανασία, a world without death.

And the righteous point at him with their finger and say, 'For this is God, He is our God forever; He will lead us evermore (על מות) (Ps. 48.15).

He will lead us in this world, He will lead us in the future.

The odd expression על מות, which concludes the psalm (and is commonly understood as a mistake for עלמות 'forever'), here receives four different interpretations. The first interpretation relates the expression to the Aramaic noun עלמות. The second is likewise based on etymology, but this time in Hebrew: 'God will lead us as those young girls'. In the third interpretation Aquila understands Ps. 48.15 as God's leading of the righteous into a world

²⁴² S. Lieberman, 'Review', Sinai 5 (1939), pp. 462–68 (464).

²⁴³ This variant reading is not attested in any manuscript, but ו and י are so similar that a scribal mistake in the exemplar cited is plausible, unless we have here an instance of *al tigre-exegesis*. Midr. Ps. 48.5 offers an interpretation that is based on the same reading.

²⁴⁴ The Krotoshin edn reads באמצע (twice!) which is clearly an error; MS Scalz reads באצבע, supported by y. M. Qat. 3.7, 83b; Lev. R. 11.9; Qoh. R. 1.11; Cant. R. 1.3.

²⁴⁵ In y. M. Qat. 3.7, 83b's parallel: עלמות בזריזות.

²⁴⁶ The parallel in y. M. Qat. has a scribal error here: אתנא סירה.

that is beyond death. Whilst dressed in Greek, this explanation is based on the Hebrew: 'not-death' or 'beyond death', probably reading אל מות (as in Prov. 12.28) for על מות,²⁴⁷ followed by a paraphrase in Hebrew which explains immortality as a world in which no death will exist. The final interpretation reads 'worlds' into the phrase, and infers from the plural that God will lead 'us' both in this world and in the world to come.

Aquila's interpretation does not stand out from the others; each of them is based on the form of the expression under consideration. The Greek and the Aramaic language are used as equally valid sources for the exposition of the Hebrew source text; Aquila's translation is in fact repeated, freely, in Hebrew. Such retro-translations occur elsewhere in the Aquila-citations too. In Lev. R. 33.6 the Greek translation פלייה פורני is immediately translated into Aramaic, דהיא מבליא גיאריו, 'which means "a worn-out prostitute"'.²⁴⁸ In Gen. R. 93.3 Aquila's translation consists of Aramaic with a single Greek word in between (חזרין דדהב בגו²⁴⁹ דיסקרין) דכסף 'apples of gold on a silver plate'), possibly indicating the crux in the verse. In three cases, as noted, his translation is not recorded in Greek but in Hebrew (y. Qid. 1.1, 59a; Gen. R. 21.1; TanB. וישלח 30).

Aquila sometimes interprets Hebrew words as if they were Greek or Aramaic. Thus the word הדר in Lev. 23.40 is interpreted as הידור (= ὕδωρ) 'water'.²⁵⁰ The hermeneutic strategy of rendering a Hebrew word by a similar sounding word in Greek would seem to agree with what is known about the Hexaplaric Aquila,²⁵¹ and is well-attested in rabbinic literature in general; the same strategy may underly the translation of Est. 1.6 in Est. R. 2.7.²⁵² The authenticity of this reading is not beyond doubt: the Hexapla elsewhere equates הדר to δαυαπρέπεια 'glory', a literal translation. Either we must assume that Aquila, like TgOnq, sometimes substitutes the aggadic for the literal equivalent, or this is a rabbinic ad-hoc translation, unrelated to the version of Aquila.

²⁴⁷ Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 103. Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 45 rejects the former, and maintains that he read either על מות or עלמות. On the other hand, it is also possible to interpret על as 'beyond'.

²⁴⁸ Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 103.

²⁴⁹ Correcting בגו into בני with MSS Vat30 and Vat60.

²⁵⁰ y. Suk. 3.5, 53d; Lev. R. 30.7; Pes. K. 27.9; cf. b. Suk. 35a; Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 101.

²⁵¹ Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 42.

²⁵² Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 48 n. 1; Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 104.

An interesting variation occurs in the quoted translations of Aquila for Gen. 17.1. The oft-cited Gen. R. 46.3 has Aquila provide a Greek translation of the divine epitheton *אל שדי* in Gen. 17.1: *תרגם עקילס אקסיוס ואיקנוס* ‘Aquila interpreted [the divine name as] ἄξιός and ἰκανός, ‘worthy’ and ‘sufficient’, not incidentally corresponding to the two rabbinic views just given before the citation.²⁵³ However, the equally oft-overlooked TanB. 30 *וישלה* has Aquila paraphrase as follows: *אני אל שדי תירגם עקילס נאמן* “I am El Shadday” (Gen. 17.1/35.11). Aquila interpreted: I am steadfast in repaying each person according to his actions’. This take on Gen. 17.1 fits the context well. Key here is *נאמן אני לשלם*, which represents a Hebrew interpretation of the divine name *שדי*. There is no lemma in Greek, nor even an obvious translational lemma in Hebrew. The difference with Gen. R. is such that it can hardly be linked to the latter. As an interpretation of God’s name the interpretation *נאמן אני לשלם* is linked to the Tetragrammaton three times in Numbers Rabba (4.5, 8; 10.1), a late Midrash which does not refer to Aquila in this connection and makes a different exegetical point.

This text begs the question whether we have here an authentic Aquila-tradition. While the ascription is standard and sufficiently specific for Aquila to consider it among the rabbinic Aquila-translations, unlike most other traditions it is not a (retranslated) translation but an exposition. Perhaps the tradition paraphrases on the basis of a lost Aquila-translation, an exposition retro-actively attributed to Aquila (as is not uncommon in the rabbinic idea of authorship). But if we look at the previous example of Lev. 23.40 again, we notice that in each of the sources Aquila’s translation receives a similar exposition.²⁵⁴

הדר הידור אילן שהוא גדל על פני המים	γ. Suk. 3.5.53d	תירגם עקילס
שהוא דר על פני המים	הדר הידור	תירגם עקילס Pes. K. 27.8
שהוא דר על המים	הגר הדר הידור	תרגם עקילס Lev. R. 30.8

²⁵³See Veltri, ‘Der griechische Targum’, pp. 99–100; Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, pp. 176–77; Tov, ‘The Evaluation of the Greek Scripture’, p. 393; M. Graves, ‘Midrash-Like Word Plays in Aquila’s Translation of Genesis’, in T.M. Law and A. Salvesen (eds.), *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis* (CBET; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), pp. 65–86 (77), proposes to read *איקנוס איסכורס* in Gen. R. 46.3, corresponding to Aquila’s attested translation, but Veltri’s important caveat against grafting hexaplaric readings onto the rabbinic quotations would seem to apply in this case.

²⁵⁴For variants, see Pes. K. edn Mandelbaum, II, p. 413; Lev. R. edn Margulies, III, p. 707.

The structure is: Aquila interpreted + lemma + translation + explanation. Note that the explanation contains a *second* interpretation of *דור* as *דור* 'dwell, sojourn' in the Midrashim, but not in the Yerushalmi. This leaves the possibility open that the actual translation dropped out in TanB. where lemma and translation are not actually attested. But it also shows that the exposition became part of the Aquila-traditions, whether or not it originally was, and that subsequent additional interpretations (such as *דור* *שהוא דור* represents) could come about, possibly in the process of oral instantiations. The same situation of a solitary exposition is found in y. Qid. 1.1, 59a:

דאמ' ²⁵⁵ ר' יוסי בשם ר' יוחנן תירגם עקילס הגר לפני ר' עקיבה והיא שפחה נחרפת
 לאיש בכתושה לפני איש כמ' דאת אמ' ותשטח עליו הריפות
 'For R. Yose said in the name of R. Yoḥanan, Aquila the Proselyte interpreted
 before R. Aqiva, "And she is a slave, designed for another man" (Lev. 19.20)
 [applies] to one who is crushed before another man, as you say, "And she
 spread out grain over it" (2 Sam. 17.19).'

Again, the translation is absent, and the lemma possibly too although it occurs in the exposition. The Yerushalmi clearly identifies Aquila as the proselyte who interpreted in the Palestinian interbellum. The inclusion of explicit exposition, based on a translation not repeated here, points to a development among Palestinian rabbinic circles to consider Aquila's version as a legitimate source for halakhic enquiry wherever lexical clarification is desired, whether or not of a midrashic kind. The use of translations for this purpose was not uncontroversial, but the oldest textual recension of Sifra, as we have seen,²⁵⁶ includes *targum* among the sources for legal instruction—a position which would ultimately be dropped and never seems to have been adopted in the Eastern Diaspora. The early nature of the tradition in Sifra accords well with the standing of Aquila.

If translation and exposition are not necessarily synchronous sources, we may have to sever the links between Aquila's translation and its midrashic application. Thus the possibility of a discrepancy between translation and application, with consequences for the possible language of the quoted translation, becomes more likely in the case of the defective quotation in Gen. R. 21.1:

²⁵⁵ At this point ms Scalz has a large supplement by another hand.

²⁵⁶ See p. 264 above.

ויאמר אחד קדוש לפלמוני המדבר ר' הונא לפלניה תרגם עקילס לפנימי דיבר זה אדם הראשון שהיתה מחיצתו לפנים ממלאכי השרת
 'And another holy one said unto that certain one who spoke' (Dan. 8.13). R. Huna said, It means, to so-and-so. Aquila interpreted, To פנימי/πνεῦμα [who] spoke.²⁵⁷ This refers to Adam the First, whose partition was within that of the ministering angels.

Since the exposition in the final sentence clearly takes לפנימי as the Hebrew word 'within' ('whose partition was within'), it seems natural enough to assume 'within' is Aquila's interpretation. But if we dissociate the following exposition from Aquila's interpretation—in which connection it should be noted that MS Vat30 reads מלמעלן לפנים—a Greek translation (πνεῦμα) becomes more plausible. In this case, however, there are three further complications. Important MSS read לפנימי דיבר, which render the Greek nature of the first word less likely. On the other hand, the word דיבר does not seem to be intrinsic to the quotation of Aquila, hence may well be a gloss that was added during the process of textual transmission. However, even if only the word לפנימי would represent Aquila's translation, the biblical lemma is still missing—which is highly unusual for such quotations, whether from Aquila or not. And finally, that the Hexaplaric translation attested for Aquila differs, with the transliteration τῷ φελεμουνί,²⁵⁸ does not enhance the likelihood that Aquila's translation has been quoted in Gen. R. 21.1.²⁵⁹

Whether or not the Hebrew exposition is based on the Greek translation, or the Biblical Hebrew source, remains open in the case of y. Shab. 6.4, 8b. Here, within a long list of translations, Aquila's version for Isa. 3.20's בתי נפש is provided, אסטומוכריאה, תירגם עקילס, possibly στόμιον χαρίεν which could denote a 'fine ornament for the neck', although this 'translation' of the transliteration into a Greek phrase that makes contextual sense is by no means certain, as it is based on a single citation in Pollux's *Archaeologus*, and quite a few alternative attempts have failed to sway the argument.²⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the Greek is followed by the almost equally ambiguous comment דבר שניתן על בת הנפש 'something placed on the ...';

²⁵⁷ For πνεῦμα, see S. Krauss, 'Akylas, der Proselyt', in *Festschrift zum achtzigsten Geburtstage Moritz Steinschneider's* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1896), pp. 148–63 (153). Note that most witnesses do not support דיבר or המדבר (edn Theodor-Albeck, p. 198).

²⁵⁸ Field, *OrHex*, II, p. 924.

²⁵⁹ Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 49.

²⁶⁰ Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 102 cites Poll. 5.98 (edn Hemsterhuis) as suggested by H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford University Press, 1924). For

the interpretation of *בת הנפש*, a neologism based on the Hebrew source text, is not clear itself, and ‘stomach’, ‘bosom’, ‘neck’, ‘self’, and ‘appetites’ have all been suggested, while Bible translations vary from ‘perfume box’, ‘tablets’ to ‘talisman’.²⁶¹ The suspicion that the Old Greek translators simply made up their equivalents may perhaps be extended to modern commentators and bible translators.²⁶²

A similar instance of combining a Greek translation with Hebrew or Aramaic is Aquila’s translation of Dan. 5.5, quoted in *y. Yom. 3.10(8)*, 41a:

הילני אמו עשתה נברשת שלוזה על פתחו של היכל תרין אמורין חד אמ’ מנרתא וחרנה
 אמ’ קונכיתא תרג’ עקילס לקבל נברשתא [לקבל] לו(ס) [מ]פרס²⁶³
 ‘Helene, his mother, had a golden lamp made over the gate of the Temple’
 (*m. Yom. 3.10*). Two [rabbis] were discussing [this]. One said, A menorah, but the
 other said, A bowl. Aquila interpreted, ‘Opposite the lampstand’ (Dan. 5.5),
 Opposite the *λαμπάδος* [‘torch’].²⁶⁴

To illuminate the identity of Queen Helene’s donation to the Temple, two sages provide an interpretation, the latter of which is a Greek loanword. Then Aquila’s interpretation of the same lexeme in Dan. 5.5 is provided (the reading of *ms Scalz*, *לוספרס*, must be corrected following the *edn* into *למפרס*, and in this latter reading the *ר* would seem to be an error for *ד*). The structure is: Aquila interpreted + lemma + translation, but there is no exposition here. Nor is there any decision as to the correct interpretation. To appreciate the structure of the Aquila interpretations, Table 8.4 contains a simplified scheme.

some alternative interpretations, see Krauss, ‘Akylas’, p. 161 and Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, II, p. 78; Dalman, *Handwörterbuch*, p. 29; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 90.

²⁶¹ Levy, *WTM*, I, p. 120 (‘eine Putzsache des Weibes’); Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 43 offers ‘the receptacle of the appetites’ (?) and in a footnote the alternative ‘upon the self’.

²⁶² For the Septuagint, see A.Th. Hartmann, *Die Hebräerin am Putztisch und als Braut* (Amsterdam: Ziegler, 1809–1810), p. 203 (cited after J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* [WBC, 24; Waco: Word Books, 1985]). See further modern translations; HALAT, I, p. 120; G.R. Driver, ‘Suggestions and Objections’, *ZAW* 55 (1937), pp. 68–72 and Clines, *Dictionary*, v, p. 734 (without any argument).

²⁶³ The Krotoshin *edn* reads *למפרס לקבל*; in *ms Scalz* the original reading *לוספרס* was corrected by another hand to *למפרס לקבל*.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, I, p. 70. Field, *OrHex*, II, p. 919 notes that Buxtorff in his *Lexicon* quotes the *Yerushalmi* as *למפרס*.

Source	verse	Aq.In.	lemma	Greek	exp.	2nd
y. Yom. 3.9(8),41a	Dan. 5.5	yes	yes	yes	no	n/a
y. Meg. 2.3, 73b	Ps. 48.15	yes	preceding	yes	yes	yes
y. M. Qat. 3.7,83b	"	yes	preceding	yes	yes	yes
Lev. R. 11.9	"	yes	preceding	yes	yes	yes
Qoh. R. 1.11	"	yes	yes	yes	no	series
y. Shab. 6.4,8b	Isa. 3.20	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
y. Suk. 3.5,53d	Lev. 23.40	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Pes. K. 27.8	"	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Lev. R. 30.8	"	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
y. Qid. 1.1,59a	Lev. 19.20	yes	no/yes	no	yes	n/a
Gen. R. 21.1	Dan. 8.13	yes	no	yes ?	yes	yes ?
Gen. R. 46.3	Gen. 17.1	yes	no	yes	no	n/a
TanB. וישלח 30	"	yes	no	no	yes	n/a
Gen. R. 93.3	Prov. 25.11	yes	yes	yes+Aramaic	no	n/a
Lev. R. 33.6	Ezek. 23.43	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Lam. R. 1.1(B)	Ezek. 16.10	yes	yes	yes	no	no
PesK 11.8	"	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Cant. R. 4.24	"	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Cant. R. 4.26	"	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Lev. R. 33.1	Prov. 18.21	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Est. R. 2.7	Est. 1.6	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Qoh. R. 11.3	Isa. 5.6	yes	yes	Aramaic	no	no

Table 8.4: The rabbinic quotations of Aquila²⁶⁵

Aquila's translations are invariably introduced by the words 'Aquila translated'. The past tense stands in contrast to all other citations of Aramaic versions, in which the present tense is invariably used, while the verb **תרגם** has a different connotation in these Palestinian sources than it has in the Bavli. That the past tense points to a written translation instead of an oral-performative one, becomes clear in the following two cases. In Lam. R. 1.1 the words **ואלבישך רקמה** of Ezek. 16.10 are twice translated (edn Buber, pp. 41–42):

²⁶⁵Aq.In. = Aquila interpreted; exp. = Hebrew exposition; 2nd = second interpretation of lemma. I have not included Num. R. 9.48, 'Onqelos interpreted...', since the quotation is taken from TgOnq indeed.

[ר' ברכיה] בשם ר' אבדימי דחיפה משל למלך שהיה לו בן כל זמן שהוא עושה רצונו של אביו היה מלבישו בגדים בדודים²⁶⁶ וכל זמן שהיה כועס עליו היה מלבישו סמרטוטין כך כל זמן שישראל עושים רצונו של מקום מלבישן כלי מילת הה"ד ואלבישך רקמה ר' סמאי אומר פורפירא תירגם עקילס אפיקולטון²⁶⁷ וכיון שהעיסוהו הלבשוהו בגדים בדודים איכה ישבה בדד

R. Berakhya in the name of R. Abdimi of Ḥaifa, It may be likened to a king who had a son. So long as he obeyed the will of his father he clothed him in garments of fine wool, but whenever he was angry with him he clothed him in rags. Similarly, so long as Israel obeyed the will of the Omnipresent, He clothed them in items of fine wool; this is written, 'I clothed you with embroidered garments' (Ezek. 16.10).

R. Simay says, 'purple'.

Aquila interpreted, 'embroidered [garments]'.

But when they disregarded the will of the Holy One, blessed be He, He clothed them in garments of loneliness, [as it is written], 'How lonely sits the city' (Lam. 1.1).

R. Simay first renders *ורקמה ואלבישך* with *פורפירא* = πορφύρα 'purpur', which is a Greek interpretation, then refers to Aquila's translation of *אפיקולטון*. The Greek word is probably to be identified with ποικιλτόν 'embroidered', a translation which the Hexapla preserves in the case of Ps. 44.15. There are some notable variant readings for Aquila's translation among the versions. First of all, Version A of Lam. R. refers to Onqelos rather than Aquila. And second, the Greek in Hebrew transliteration varies. Among the variant readings, we see a tendency to metathesis of ק and ל between those readings above the line and those below, in addition to vowel changes, and a double translation, if such it is, in the *editio princeps* of Lam. R. which shows the same variation by metathesis. Similar instances of metathesis occur in the other Aquila-translations, for example Gen. R. 46.3. Some scholars defended Lam. R. Version A as an original double translation of Aquila,²⁶⁸ but a scribal conflation is far more likely. Precisely because this double reading combines the two main consonant patterns,

²⁶⁶This reading is presumably corrupt; the *editio princeps* reads בגדי מילתין, which agrees with the Arukh (Kohut, II, p. 16) which explains these words as בגדים נאים.

²⁶⁷Variant: תרגם אונקלוס אפיקולטון פליקטא (see Buber edn, p. 42 n. 1א). Cf. Krauss, 'Akylas', pp. 148–63.

²⁶⁸Krauss, 'Akylas', pp. 148–63; Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, pp. 179–80, who appears to prefer the double reading, understood as ἐπικαλυπτήριον πλεκτόν 'plaited covering'—which does not fit the context, however. His main concern is to demonstrate that

אפיקוליטון	Lam. R. (Version B)
אפקלטורין פליקטא	Lam. R. (Version A)
פיקלטון	Pes. K. 11.8 MS AIU47
פילקטין	Pes. K. 11.8 MS OX23
פילקאטון	Pes. K. 11.8 MS OX106
איפליקתא	Cant. R. 4.11, §2 (4.24)
אפליקטא	Cant. R. 4.12, §2 (4.26)

Table 8.5: Purple

it is a conflation of a basic text with a marginal variant that by scribal error stole its place into the running text. Such conflations and interpolations of other texts are not uncommon in this version, which also Aramaizes Aquila into Onqelos. As Mandel points out, Lam. R. exists in two recensions which represent distinct textual developments.²⁶⁹ Version A circulated mainly in the Middle East and North Africa, whereas Version B went around in Italy, North France, the Provence and Germany. Crucially, Mandel argues, Version B has its roots in Byzantium and generally represents the original Palestinian composition more faithfully than Version A, which arose in the Islamic period and betrays a more extensive oral and written development of the text. Now, Version A is represented by the *editio princeps*, while Buber (with the exception of the Proems) reflects Version B.

But why is Rabbi Simay's Greek translation introduced by אומר, while Aquila's version is marked by תירגם? Exactly the same difference of terminology occurs in Est. R. 2.7, where Aquila's version is followed by Rabbi Binis' Greek translation.²⁷⁰ Veltri suggests that the verb תרגם implies authority, in contrast to אמר, but does not offer any arguments to support this claim.²⁷¹ He could have explained that תרגם has the connotation of 'explaining halakhical problems', but this connotation pertains to the Bavli, not the Yerushalmi or the Midrashim. Nor does it imply a difference with אמר. The co-texts certainly do not suggest these renderings of Rabbi Simay and Rabbi Binis to be of lower standing than those of Aquila.

scholars have harmonized the Hexaplaric reading and the rabbinic quotations, but in this particular instance he fails to explain why the other readings are inferior.

²⁶⁹ See Mandel, *Midrash Lamentations Rabbati*; Mandel, 'Between Byzantium and Islam'.

²⁷⁰ Est. R. 2.7: חור כרפס ותכלת תרגם עקילס איירינן קרפסינן ור' ביבי אמר טינן.

²⁷¹ Veltri, 'Der griechische Targum', p. 109.

The difference can be explained on the basis of a distinction between an exclusively oral and a mixed oral and written transmission, as the verb תרגם has the connotation of 'writing' in the West, in contrast to the East. This is best illustrated by the formula 'here [in Babylonia] they interpret... [there] in the West they say...' An example of this formula which involves translation is offered in the following section below. The distinction in terminology is best explained as a contrast between purely oral traditions and one rooted in a written version, even if transmitted orally by rabbinic tradents. In consequence, any attempt to dissociate the 'rabbinic Aquila' from a comprehensive translation, as reflected in our piecemeal Hexaplaric traditions, is not convincing.

The rabbinic Aquila-traditions differ frequently from what we would expect on the basis of the fragmentary hexaplaric evidence. But due caution must be exercised in using hexaplaric evidence for three reasons. Despite the fact that Aquila's overall translation strategy would tend to maintain consistent Hebrew-Greek equivalents, exceptions cannot be ruled out, and we should beware an exaggeration of his proverbial woodenness in translation strategies.²⁷² A characterisation of literalness should never govern and overrule the detail, as TgOnq and TgJon illustrate in their general consistency interspersed with meaningful exceptions. Furthermore, we cannot always be certain that the hexaplaric evidence, culled from a variety of secondary sources, can itself be relied upon. And finally, there is growing evidence that the Aquilan materials reflect 'a movement running into the medieval period that updated and extended features of his translation',²⁷³ a 'school of Aquila', which has consequences for the observation of discrepancies between rabbinic and Hexaplaric citations. Likewise, caution must be exercised in using the rabbinic Aquila-translations. There is evidence that implications were drawn from his translations, which were retroactively subscribed to the translator himself—even where, as noted, the expositions actually contain a different interpretation of the

²⁷² See K. Hyvarinen, *Die Übersetzung von Aquila* (ConBOT, 10; Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1977), p. 86.

²⁷³ A. Salvesen, 'Did Aquila and Symmachus Shelter under the Rabbinic Umbrella?', in T.M. Law and A. Salvesen (eds.), *Greek Scripture and the Rabbis* (CBET; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), pp. 107–26 (123–24); see also A. Salvesen, 'The Relationship of LXX and the Three in Exodus 1–24 to the Readings of F^b', in N.R.M. de Lange, J.G. Krivoruchko, and C. Boyd-Taylor (eds.), *Jewish Reception of Greek Bible Versions: Studies in their Use in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (TSMJ, 23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 103–127 (105).

scriptural lemma. There is no reason to rule out the possibility that a Greek translation other than Aquila came to be associated with his name—just like Rav Yoseph's fame became a magnet for targumic attributions.

8.5 Here they interpret ...

The distinction between the use of תרגום in Babylonia over against אמר in Palestine, as observed in Chapter Four, is illustrated in the formula הכא תרגימו... במערבא אמרי 'here [in Babylonia] they interpret. . . [there] in the West they say. . .'.²⁷⁴ More instances may have existed,²⁷⁵ because the elliptic version with either the first or second part occurs a substantial number of times, as observed above; collections of such differences may have been created at one point in time. What is interesting is the distinctive terminology. In Lamentations Rabba, a Palestinian Midrash, some passages are introduced by the following statements: רבנין דתמן אמרי 'the rabbis of there say' and רבנין דהכא אמרי 'the rabbis of here say', again referring to Babylonian and Palestinian traditions, but using 'say' for both.²⁷⁶ The alternation of תרגום and אמר is therefore of a geographical nature.

The formula does not normally signal any language shift but rather a difference of interpretation between the Babylonian and Palestinian rabbis. Some instances, however, naturally involve an element of translation which brings out the lexical meaning of the words under consideration and are therefore close to the instances cited 'as we translate'. Since not all instances involve translation and there is an explicit contrast between 'here' and 'there', the reference is to the way a phrase is interpreted, but not to any running translation. The following example is taken from b. Git. 68a:

עשיתי לי שרים ושרות ותענוגות בני האדם שדה ושרות ושרות אלו מיני זמר ותענוגות בני האדם אלו בריכות ומרחצאות שדה ושרות הכא תרגימו שידה ושידתין במערבא אמרי שידתא אמר רבי יוחנן שלש מאות מיני שדים היו בשיחין ושידה עצמה איני יודע מה היא אמר מר הכא תרגימו שידא ושידתין
'I got singers, both men and women, and delights of the flesh, and many

²⁷⁴ See above, pp. 155–57.

²⁷⁵ In b. B. Bat. 74b at least the phrase הכא תרגימו is completed with אמרי במערבא in Vat115 and Hamr65.

²⁷⁶ Mandel, 'Between Byzantium and Islam', p. 94.

concubines' (Qoh. 2.8).²⁷⁷

שרים ושרות ('male and female singers') means diverse kinds of music; 'the delights of the sons of men' are ornamental pools and baths.

שדה ושדות 'Shida and shidot', here [in Babylonia]²⁷⁸ they translate as 'male and female demons'. In the West [Palestine] they say [it means] 'female demon'.

Rabbi Yoḥanan said, There were three hundred kinds of demons in Shihin, but what a shidah is I do not know.

Mar said, Here they translate 'male and female demons'.

Interpretations vary between ancient and modern translations alike;²⁷⁹ the exact meaning of the Hebrew phrase שדה ושדות remains open to conjecture.²⁸⁰ The reason why the *gemara* proffers this interpretative unit is the overarching topic of Solomon's dealings with demons; the understanding of this Hebrew *hapax legomenon* falls into place within this interest, as the repetition of the translation as male and female demons, ascribed to Mar, indicates. The translation involves a real translation from one language into another, citing the Hebrew source-text followed by its Aramaic translation. In contrast to instances of 'as we translate', the Aramaic version is not an external source of evidence, support, or background illumination, but the focus of interest.

The alternative translation of 'the West' is itself somewhat obscure. Tradition has it that שידתא refers to a 'carriage' (see Rashi), while Aramaists take it to denote a 'chest' or 'box'.²⁸¹ Neither of these interpretations is likely to be correct. The Western interpretation makes no distinction between the first and second element of שדה ושדות as either male and female demons, or cold and hot water gutters as TgQoh has it,²⁸² or male and female judges as in one of Qoh. R.'s interpretations. More likely, the Western interpretation—correctly—identifies the reference as

²⁷⁷In the translation of the NRSV. The modern translation varies considerably at this point.

²⁷⁸A marginal comment in Vat130 supplies בבבל at this point. Vat140 omits תירגמו the first time around.

²⁷⁹Cf. Goshen-Gottstein, *מסגרות המקרא*, II, pp. 152–53.

²⁸⁰These words, שדה ושדות, are enigmatic. See HALAT, p. 1319.

²⁸¹Levy, WTM, IV, p. 511; F. Schultess, 'Aramäisches', ZA 24 (1910), pp. 47–58 (57–58); Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences*, p. 102; Sokoloff, DJBA, pp. 1132–33.

²⁸²See A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), v, p. 152; M. Taradach and J. Ferrer, *Un Targum de Qohélet* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1998), p. 34.

being a heightened force of a singular noun when it is followed by its plural form, a grammatical construction that occurs elsewhere,²⁸³ which refers to a single type of demon alone, the female demons. The aspect of heightening is disregarded in later interpretations.²⁸⁴ Accordingly, the Hebrew is represented by שידתא²⁸⁵ and refers to 'female demons', which leaves the difference between the Babylonian and Palestinian versions as one of a syntactic nature. All witnesses attest a single form for what those in the West interpret—including the citation in Midr. Ps. 78.12—and the fact remains that in this Western interpretation no gender differentiation is made even if an accidental omission is assumed. Possibly, this chimes in with the opinion of the (Palestinian) Rabbi Yoḥanan who goes on record to say, 'what a שדה is I do not know', while he identifies ושדות as demons; his opinion has probably been mangled in transmission.

There are no further examples of the full formula, 'here... there...', all others lacking the translational aspect, but there are some instances with elliptic headers. In b. B. Bat. 74b, הכא תרגימו 'here they interpret' is contrasted with a view ascribed to the Palestinian Amora R. Yoḥanan, essentially creating the same contrast; in fact, two MSS substitute במערבא אמרי 'in the West they say' for 'R. Yoḥanan said'.²⁸⁶ Within a discussion of extraordinary sea-creatures, Gen. 1.21 and Leviathan receive mention with a little understood translation which is not found in any Targum known to us—yet it is absent from Goshen-Gottstein's 'lost fragments'—and its reading widely varies (אודילי ימא, אדילי ימא, אדילי ימא, עדילי ימא) (ימא).²⁸⁷ Another instance of lexical focus is evident in b. B. Meṣ. 78b, and once more the language of interpretation appears to be contingent, the purpose, however, to supply lexical precision in halakhic deliberations.

²⁸³ Cf. Jud. 5.30; Ps. 72.5; Isa. 51.8; Ps. 102.25.

²⁸⁴ While it is somewhat conceivable that the plural element has been dropped, as Levy suggested, WTM, IV, p. 511, it would not explain the confusion.

²⁸⁵ Although Vat130 has the variant reading ושידתא for ושדות in the Babylonian version, corrected by a later hand, this agreement with the Western version seems to be a scribal error; the repetition in Mar's statement does have the reading ושדות. Mun95 abbreviates: שידת'. Vat140 agrees with Vilna.

²⁸⁶ Ham165 and Vat115. The reading with R. Yoḥanan is supported by Ox249, EscG13, Mun95, H1337, TS F1(1)30 and the editions of Pes1511 and Vilna.

²⁸⁷ Ox249 אדילי ימא; EscG13 אדילי דימא; Ham165 אדילי ימא; Vat115 אדילי ימא; Mun95 אדילי דימא; H1337 אדילי ימא; TS F1(1)30 אדילי ימא; Vilna אדילי דימא; Pes1511 אדילי ימא. The etymology is unknown according to Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 81, who records the lemma under the form quoted in the Arukh: אדילא.

Such examples show that many lexical translations may not be based on available 'targums', but represent ad-hoc interpretations, even if they may have been facilitated by trained interpreters.

A variation on the formula 'Here they interpret... in the West they say...' is found in Lev. R. 23.10, where 'here' represents Palestine and 'there' Babylonia, and where the two halves both have the verb 'say' and not 'interpret' following the distinction in the terminology of translation argued above. The following example of scriptural translation in this Midrash is not formally marked as a translation, but otherwise shares the same function of lexical precision and similar hallmarks of late glossing (Lev. R. 23.10):²⁸⁸

שלשה הן שברחו מן העבירה ושיתף הקב"ה שמו בשמן ואילו הן יוסף ויעל ופלטי יוסף
מנין עדות ביהוסף שמו מהו ביהוסף יה מעיד עליו שלא נגע באשת פוטיפרע יעל מנין
ותצא יעל לקראת סיסרא וגו' ותכסהו בשמיכה מהו בשמיכה רבנן דהכא אמ' בסודרא
ורבנן דתמן אמ' במשיכלא אמ' ריש לקיש חיזרנו על כל המקרא ולא מצינו כלי ששמו
סמיכה ומהו סמיכה ש' כת' שמי כה שמי מעיד עליה שלא נגע בה אותו רשע פלטי
מנין כתוב אחד אומר ושאל נתן את מיכל בתו לפלטי וכתוב אחר אומר וישלח איש
בשת ויקחה מעם איש מעם פלטיאל קרי ליה פלטי וקרי ליה פלטיאל מי נסי פלטי ומי
יה פלטיאל אלא אל מעיד עליו שלא נגע באשת דוד

[1] There were three who fled from transgression and the Holy One, blessed be He, attached His name to theirs and these are Joseph, Yael, and Palti.

[2] Whence of Joseph? 'He appointed it in Yehoseph for a testimony' (Ps. 81.6).

What does [the word] 'Yehoseph' indicate? Yah testifies of him that he did not touch Potiphar's wife.

[3] Whence of Yael? 'And Yael went out to meet Sisera' etcetera 'and she covered him with a שמיכה' (Jud. 4.18).

What does 'with a שמיכה' mean? Our rabbis here [in Palestine] say, [It means] with a scarf, while our rabbis there [in Babylonia] say, [It means] with a wash basin.

Said Resh Lakish, We have gone over the entire Scripture but have not found any object with the name סמיכה.

So what does סמיכה mean? [The letter] shin is written [rather than a samekh, hence read the word as] My name is here, My name testifies of her that this wicked man did not touch her.

[4] Whence of Palti? One verse says, 'Now Saul had given Michal his daughter [David's wife] to Palti' (1 Sam. 25.44), but another verse says, 'So Ish-

²⁸⁸ Margulies, רבה, ויקרא רבה, p. תקמב.

bosheth sent and had her taken away from her husband, Paltiel' (2 Sam. 3.15), he is called both Palti and Paltiel.

Who took [the name] Palti and who gave [him the name] Paltiel? In point of fact the [element] *el* [in his name] indicates that God testifies of him that he did not touch David's wife.

The issue is twofold. Within the framework of three ancestors who fled from temptation, Joseph, Yael and Palti, the prooftexts point to a theophoric element attached to each of their names which indicates their innocence. For Yael, her virtue turns on the *hapax legomenon* שמיכה. The text assumes that Sisera's presence in Yael's inner tent has sexual connotations, as attested elsewhere in rabbinic literature,²⁸⁹ but her actions exonerate her. The question is, how is her status apparent from the Scriptures? Not only is the biblical record much more transparent in the case of David and Palti than it is with Yael in the avoidance of temptation, but Yael's name has also not lost its theophoric component, as have Joseph's and Palti's names, in a shortened version.

The first interpretation of שמיכה is סודרא 'scarf', a common loan from Greek (σουδάριον) which occurs in many Aramaic dialects,²⁹⁰ but the second interpretation משיכלא is rare and far more difficult to place. The phrase 'our rabbis here' is typically Palestinian,²⁹¹ hence the Lev. R. 23.10 tradition appears to contrast Palestinian ('here') and Babylonian ('there') takes on the lexeme in question. The homonym in JBA, which would suggest itself were it not deemed ill-suited for the present context, has the meaning 'wash basin'. Jastrow's attempt to explain the lexeme in Lev. R. 23.10 (and a secondary use in Yalq. S.) as a compound of כלי and מאן, 'a sort of cloak', is unconvincing, and obviously starts from the speculation that a piece of cloth fits the context best to find the closest thing

²⁸⁹Y. Zakovitch, 'Siseras Tod', ZAW 93 (1981), pp. 364–74.

²⁹⁰Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, I, p. 373; Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 370; Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 792.

²⁹¹In spite of אמרי in some of the textual witnesses. JPA does not normally drop the final nun in the plural of the participle in the Geniza fragments, but it does with this verb; see S. Heijmans, תורת הצורות של הארמית שבתלמוד הירושלמי על פי קטעי גניזה (MA dissertation, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv 2005), p. 88. In the printed edn, the phenomenon is more widespread, which suggests that copyists were influenced by JBA. Cf. Dalman, *Grammatik*, pp. 101–103, 285, 301. With final nun, רבנן דהכא אמרין occurs in y. Shab. 3.3, 6a and Lam. R. 3.50. Without (as רבנן דהכא אמרי) in y. Shab. 13.1, 14a and Lev. R. 23.10. The phrase רבנן דהכא occurs especially in the Yerushalmi (thirteen times).

possible.²⁹² Perhaps because the reference to 'there' does not necessarily imply Babylonia, Sokoloff surprisingly lists *משכיל* as a Palestinian Aramaic lexeme, although with the meaning 'unclear; poss. a clay utensil' and the spelling which sets it most apart from the Babylonian lexeme *משיכלא*.²⁹³ Yet there is little advantage in a clay utensil over a large wash basin for covering Sisera. All in all, the Babylonian lexeme for 'wash basin' (which could be very large) still seems the best possibility.²⁹⁴ Neither option agrees with TgJon's *בגונכא* 'with a blanket'.²⁹⁵

The language of the unit changes into Aramaic in the discussion of the meaning of *שמיכה*. Such switches are far from unusual in rabbinic literature, although their frequency and function within the literary structure varies by document and requires further study. In this Midrash, Aramaic frequently occurs for lexical glosses which explain the meaning of a Hebrew lexeme. Goshen-Gottstein includes a number of such 'fragments',²⁹⁶ which do not address any lexemes in Leviticus (while the translations in Gen. R., for example, also address a fair number of instances in Genesis).²⁹⁷ In the present unit, the midrashic argument consists of three legs [2–4], one for each ancestor. Each leg has the following structure: (1) the question, *X מנין* 'Whence of X?'; (2) the proof-text; (3) the explication that God's name is attached to X. Only in Yael's block Aramaic semantics interrupt the argument; the other two do not have such a gloss.

Yael's unblemished behaviour towards Sisera cannot be rooted to variations of her name, but to the way her action is described. Resh Laqish observes that *שמיכה* cannot be identified with any other item in Tanakh,

²⁹² Jastrow, Dictionary, p. 852. Cf. Kohut, *ערוך השלם*, v, pp. 272–73.

²⁹³ Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 334; Sokoloff, DJBA, pp. 713, 715. Only MS Vat32 reads *במשכילא*; OX3 and Jer515 read *במשיכה*.

²⁹⁴ Goshen-Gottstein, *מיתרגומי המקרא*, II, p. 120 favours Levy's reference to a washing or cooking utensil (Levy, WTM, III, pp. 277–78). There is some confusion about the location of each interpretation, as Goshen-Gottstein points out.

²⁹⁵ For variant readings, most if not all due to scribal errors, see Smelik, Targum of Judges, p. 389, and n. 363 for Pesh and LXX.

²⁹⁶ Goshen-Gottstein, *מיתרגומי המקרא*, II, nos. 8.17, 24; 9.33, 42, 57; 10.04; 11.36, 41, 42.

²⁹⁷ Gen. R. 73.10: Gen. 30.42; Gen. R. 23.3: Gen. 4.21; Gen. R. 32.5: Gen. 7.4; Gen. R. 41.6: Gen. 14.5; Gen. R. 41.8: Gen. 14.13; Gen. R. 50.3, 7: Gen. 19.9; Gen. R. 67.6: Gen. 27.39; Gen. R. 88.4: Gen. 40.5; Gen. R. 98.4: Gen. 49.3; Gen. R. 98.15: Gen. 49.19; Gen. R. 98.20: Gen. 49.25; Gen. R. 17.6: Gen. 2.21; Gen. R. 26.5: Gen. 2.6; Gen. R. 40.6: Gen. 13.9; Gen. R. 60.14: Gen. 24.62; Gen. R. 73.10: Gen. 30.37; Gen. R. 76.4: Gen. 39.2.

which justifies the crucial interpretation by *notarikon*: שמי כה = שמיכה 'My Name is here', hence God's name is indeed attached to Yael. The Palestinian and Babylonian interpretations in Aramaic thwart this argument—unless the *disagreement* and difficulty in interpretation is the real focus of the reference to this lexical tradition, which undermines any familiar identification of the lexeme. On this assumption, the *intermezzo* is not an *intermezzo* but essential preparation for Resh Laqish's observation that there is no item as the שמיכה anywhere else in Tanakh.²⁹⁸ Whether or not these two translations stand out as a gloss to Lev. R. 23.10, they seamlessly link alternative takes in Aramaic to the extant discussion and enhance the final argument with lexical annotations.

8.6 Unmarked translations

Unmarked translations occur throughout rabbinic literature. Goshen-Gottstein, with the invaluable assistance of Rimón Kasher, collected most of these translations. It is not always transparent whether they stem from once integral translations of biblical books or ad-hoc translations of individual clauses and expressions,²⁹⁹ but whether one or the other their use and function within rabbinic discourse is relevant for the present discussion. The following discussion will only sample a few representative instances without the slightest attempt to be comprehensive, but it should be stressed that a very large number of these 'lost fragments of translation' are located in Palestinian sources, unmarked for their translational aspect, as we would expect having surveyed the terminology of oral translation in the Yerushalmi above. In fact, the only instances where the Yerushalmi or the early Midrashim have marked translations are when Aquila is cited, or when a translation is not wholly in touch with rabbinic thought.

There are copious examples of lexical and translational glosses in rabbinic literature, which usually are unmarked as translations. A common structure is: What is X [in Hebrew]? It is Y [in Aramaic], or a list with A is

²⁹⁸ Note that סוּרר occurs in TgNeof Exod. 34.33-35; FragTg Exod. 34.33; TgPsJ Exod. 21.15-16; 34.33-35; Lev. 20.10; Deut. 22.22; 24.7; TgRuth 3.15. However, משיכלא does not occur in our texts as far as I know.

²⁹⁹ Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, pp. 152-53, 209, rightly reject these as indubitable citations.

X, B is Y, C is Z. A representative instance is found in b. Shab. 128a seeking to establish the identity of plants referred to by their Hebrew name:

מאי אמיתא³⁰⁰ ניניא³⁰¹ סיאא אמר רב יהודה (סיאה)³⁰² צתרי³⁰³ אזוב אברתא קורנית
קורניתא שמה והא הווא דאמר להו מאן בעי³⁰⁴ קורניתא ואישתכח חשי אלא סיאא
צתרי אזוב אברתא קורניתא חשי³⁰⁵

What is אמיתא? It is Ammi copticum. ?סיאה? Said Rav Yehuda, it is savory.
אזוב? It is hyssop. ?קורנית? It is thyme. But a certain man said to others, Who
is looking for קורניתא, and it was found [to be] wild thyme. Rather, ?סיאה is
savory, אזוב is hyssop, and קורנית is wild thyme.

The identification of flora which featured in recipes or in otherwise halakhically relevant contexts is a matter of great importance. The same applies to lexical precision concerning terms of fauna, minerals, toponyms and other realia. Such highly practical bilingual information may have been circulating for many realia in the Ancient Near East, with differences of opinion about the correct identification as in the geographic lists suggested for 'the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites' (Gen. 15.19) in three Palestinian and one Babylonian source,³⁰⁶ with Gen. R. 44.23 commenting:

ר' א' ערוייה³⁰⁷ שלמייה נוטייה ר' שמעון בן יוחי א' דרמסקוס ואסיא ואספמיא ר'
ליעזר בן יעקב א' אסיא ותרקי וקרטיגינא

Rabbi said, They are Arabia, the Shalmaite, and the Nabataean. R. Shimon b. Yohai said, They are the Damascus region, Asia Minor, and Apamaea. R. Leazar b. Yaaqov said, Asia Minor, Thrace, and Carthage.

Relevant for our purposes is the keen interest in proper identification as well as the circumstance that the Targums disagree with the identifications in each of the sources. Updating geographical indications in ancient texts

³⁰⁰ So Mun95 and Vilna; Ox23 reads אמיתא, Vatro8 אמצתא and Son אמתא.

³⁰¹ Ox23 reads מגאי 'mung bean' for ניניא.

³⁰² Bracketed word only in the Vilna. Note, however, that Ox23 reads סיאא אמר רב יהודה while Mun95 does not support אמר רב יהודה צתרי.

³⁰³ For צתרי (2x), Mun95 reads twice צרתי (metathesis), Ox23 צתרי, and Son first עתרי but the second time with Vilna.

³⁰⁴ Mun95 reads דבעי instead of בעי מאן להו.

³⁰⁵ Mun95 reads חשי for קורניתא.

³⁰⁶ Gen. R. 44.23; y. Shevi. 6.1, 36b; y. Qid. 1.9, 61d; b. B. Bat. 56a. See also TgOnq, TgNeof, TgPsJ and FragTg ad loc. and Goshen-Gottstein, *מסע המדע*, II, pp. 108–109.

³⁰⁷ Possibly we should follow the variant ערביה here; edn Theodor-Albeck, I, p. 446.

is one of the oldest interpretative techniques,³⁰⁸ and these translations are for that reason not necessarily quotations from an extant translation, even though they switch to another language, Aramaic, within a Hebrew context, since there could be many examples listed where the explanation is from Hebrew to Hebrew or to Greek and Latin. The language choice thus suggests not so much a bifurcation of language function but the principle of what first comes to mind, notably geographic names in the vernacular.³⁰⁹

The easy variation between Aramaic, Greek, Latin and Hebrew is manifest in the long and well-known series of lexical interpretations of y. Shab. 6.4, 8b, which includes one of Aquila's citations,³¹⁰ albeit that Aramaic naturally prevails.³¹¹ This list occurs in the context of ornaments which may or may not be worn outside on a shabbat depending on whether they classify as weaponry or as ornaments that either are or are not susceptible to impurity. The proper identification of the objects is clearly important in this context, which leads first to Num. 31.50 being glossed with lexical interpretations and then Isa. 3.18-23, which provides a catalogue of fashionable items of beauty that God will remove from the haughty daughters of Jerusalem according to a prophecy of disaster. A comparison with the Targums is instructive, but the alignment of Hebrew and Aramaic lexemes is profoundly complicated,³¹² not least by the fact that the Hebrew has five lexemes (excluding the generic gold objects) but TgNeof six and the FragTg at first sight only four, while TgOnq, TgPsJ and the Yerushalmi have five but in different lists (see Table 8.6). The diverging equivalents and number of lexemes can be resolved, however, as soon as we recognize that the order of the jewels in all the Palestinian Targums has been arranged from top to bottom—in the sequence head, neck, arm, hand, finger and breast—whereas there is no specific order in the Hebrew text and accordingly none in TgOnq or the Yerushalmi. Thus the FragTg has

³⁰⁸J. Tigay, 'An Early Technique of Aggadic Exegesis', in H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), pp. 169–89.

³⁰⁹See, e.g., y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71b; b. Yom. 10a.

³¹⁰For Aquila's translation, see p. 393 above.

³¹¹Goshen-Gottstein, *מדרגות המקרא*, 11, pp. 117–18, 128–32; Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, p. 211 (with a helpful table for Isa. 3.18–23); Labendz, 'Aquila's Bible Translation', pp. 366–67.

³¹²No alignment is attempted in either Levy, *Targum Neophyti*, 11, pp. 164–67; Goshen-Gottstein, 11, pp. 117–18; the Aramaic Bible ad loc.

וכמו	עגיל	טבעת	וצמיד	—	אצעדה	—	MT
ומחוך	קדשין	עזקן	ושבבין	—	שירין	—	TgOnq
מעזקין ³¹³	קדישין	עזקין	שישלין	שירין	קטלין	—	TgNeof
וקדשייא ומעוכי	—	ועזקיא	—	—	קורייא ועקילייא	—	FragTg(V)
מחוכי	קדשיא	עזקתא	—	קטליא	קורייא שיריא	—	TgPsJ
טפוס שלרחם	קדשייא	עזקיא	שיריא	—	כדופסלה ³¹⁴	—	y. Shab. ³¹⁵
טפוס שלדדים	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
מסלח	מסלח	מסלח	מסלח	—	מסלח	—	Pesh

Table 8.6: The ornaments of Num. 31.50³¹⁶

an equal number of lexemes, arranged rather differently, whereas TgNeof adds a few more items to the list; TgPsJ tried to harmonize with TgOnq. The list in the Yerushalmi agrees in only two places with TgOnq, in three with TgNeof and the Peshitta. Such limited agreement, quite apart from further differences in the context of these lexemes in each document, do not give rise to any literary dependency of one text on another, but appear to reflect common knowledge.

An even starker picture emerges from the lexical identification of Isa. 3.18–23, where almost each of these items in the Yerushalmi stands in contrast to that of TgJon to the same passage.³¹⁷ Only in three cases out of twenty-one does TgJon agree with y. Shab. 6.4, 8b. The latter source, naturally, also uses Greek equivalents which TgJon tends to avoid unless they have become well-established loans. TgJon obviously does not underlie the Yerushalmi at this point, quite apart from the many differences in Aramaic equivalents between the two documents. Moreover, the Greek and Latin loanwords, as well as the occasional Hebrew equivalents, suggest that there is no running translation from which R. Yehuda or R. Yoḥanan drew. If not editorial, it would seem that the list was made ad-hoc to identify

³¹³This reading seems a dittography and error for מעוכין.

³¹⁴A Geniza fragment edited by L. Ginzberg, *Yerushalmi Fragments from the Genizah*, I (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1909), reads פרופסילה, which is also attested in TgJon Isa. 3.20 as the equivalent of והצעדות.

³¹⁵See y. Shab. 6.4, 8b.

³¹⁶This table rearranges the text of the Palestinian Targums according to the order of the Hebrew text; see the editions for the original order.

³¹⁷See Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, p. 211.

a large number of ornaments in view of halakhic regulations concerning their use on a shabbat.³¹⁸

Diverging opinions are frequently and carefully recorded, as in b. R. Hash. 23a where Rav Yehuda lists four types of cedar wood, one of which is discussed for its identity, only to be contrasted with the ten types of cedar listed by Rabba bar Rav Huna, again with their identity glossed. Some of the variations may be related to geographic origins. In the latter glosses the cypress tree equates in agreement with three Palestinian sources,³¹⁹ but the two following words in the same verse show divergences between the Babylonian and Palestinian sources.³²⁰ A similar example concerning different types of dress is found in b. San. 44a (cited after Flor):

וארא בשלל אדירת שנער אחת טובה מאתים שקלים כסף רבא³²¹ אמ' איצטלא דמילתא
ושמואל אמ' סרבלא צריפא

'I saw among the spoil a fine Shinar mantle, two hundred shekels of silver' (Josh. 7.21). Rava said, It was a silk mantle, but Shmuel said, It was a clean cloak.³²²

Although unmarked, the translation of Rava agrees to an extent with TgJon, which renders אדירת שנער with אצטלאי בבלאי 'a Babylonian mantle'—Babylonian because Shinar is Babylon in Gen. 10.10 and 11.2—but Rava adds the qualification of 'silk', which, as Goshen-Gottstein suggests, appears to be rooted in a reading of שנער as שער while Shmuel cites a different translation which does not correspond to any known translation, but appears to be rooted in a reading of שנער as נער.³²³ Rava clearly does not quote TgJon here, as his interpretation of Shinar differs.³²⁴ A parallel in

³¹⁸The list is part of R. Yoḥanan citing Rav Yehuda in a Geniza fragment, but that makes no sense chronologically; Labendz, 'Aquila's Bible Translation', p. 367 n. 60.

³¹⁹Equating ברוש in Isa. 41.19 with ברתא, as in Gen. R. 15.1, y. Ket. 7.9, 31d and TanB. 9. תרומה.

³²⁰So תדהר with שאגא and תאשר with שוריבנא in the Bavli, unlike the Palestinian sources which have אדרא and פקסינון/פקסינה respectively. See Goshen-Gottstein, שקיעים מתרגומי, 11, pp. 133–34.

³²¹So Flor and Reuz, while Herzl, Mung5 and Barco support Vilna's reading of רב. As Rav and Shmuel are a standard duo in Talmudic literature, Rava may have been corrected or corrupted to Rav rather than the other way around; moreover, if at any point the abbreviation רב was used, it could have given rise to the reading רב.

³²²It is not clear exactly what type of mantle סרבלא refers to; Sokoloff, DJBA, p. 829.

³²³Goshen-Gottstein, שקיעים מתרגומי המקרא, 11, no. 11.21, pp. 118–19.

³²⁴Against Churgin, Targum Jonathan, p. 149, who gives as reference b. Shab. 128a and in the quotation אמר אסי אר!

Gen. R. 85.14 has R. Ḥanina b. Yiṣḥaq offering the alternative translation פורפורה בבליא 'a Babylonian purple garment' using a Greek loanword, πορφύρα. These translations aim at providing lexical precision and there is no need to assume an individual or series of translations lifted from a running literary composition.³²⁵ What is more interesting is the ease with which comments switch between languages to pinpoint the semantic and lexical value of certain lexemes, always in a relatively atomic fashion.³²⁶

Not all listed equivalents are of the precise lexical kind, reflecting the fact that the rabbis adapted their translation strategies according to the demands of the source text or the particular topic in which connection a verse is cited. Commenting on 2 Sam. 3.29, which brings five curses on the house of Yoab, the Yerushalmi offers the following glosses (y. Qid. 1.7, 61a):

יחולו על ראש יואב זב ומצורע ומחזיק בפלך ונופל בחרב וחסר לב³²⁷ זב תשיש ומצורע
עזיב ומחזיק בפלך בוריי נופל בחרב קצר ימים וחסר לחם מסכן
'May the house of Yoab never be without someone suffering from a discharge,
or an eruption, or a male who handles the spindle, or one slain by the sword,
or one lacking heart [bread]' (2 Sam. 3.29). 'One suffering from a discharge'—
sick. 'From an eruption'—rough. 'Who handles the spindle'—ignorant. 'Slain
by the sword'—short-lived. 'lacking bread'—poor.

The given equivalents are global, even granted the observation that the third one, 'handling the spindle', is a notorious crux in the Hebrew text.³²⁸ The emphasis is on the reach of the curses rather than their tangible effects, which are accordingly translated into slightly more general terms in the Yerushalmi. What is striking once more is that the first three glosses are in Aramaic, but the fourth in Hebrew (the fifth could be either as an Akkadian loanword in both languages). No ancient version offers the equivalents found in the Yerushalmi, which is of a more expository nature. Moving

³²⁵The same applies to y. Taan. 2.1, 65b (Joel 2.13), par. Pes. K. 24.11; 45, 69b (Isa. 21.13); y. Meg. 1.14[12], 72c (1 Sam. 9.24); y. San. 2.3, 20b (1 Sam. 25.6); y. San. 6.3(2), 23b (Josh. 7.20); Gen. R. 23.3 (Gen. 4.21); 63.14 (Isa. 21.5).

³²⁶Sometimes the language is difficult to ascertain. While לחולטנות in y. Dem. 5.9, 24d is based on an Aramaic root, translating in Lev. 25.23, its form could as well be Hebrew (indeed, the lexeme is not listed in Sokoloff, DJPA). See also Gen. R. 28.9 (lacuna in the Geniza fragments edited by M. Sokoloff, הגניזה בראשית רבה מן [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982], p. 120, 40.1) and y. Git. 4.9, 46b (לחולטנות).

³²⁷Ms Scal3 reads לב for לחם in the Hebrew Bible and the Krotoshin edn.

³²⁸Van Staaldoune-Sulman, *Targum of Samuel*, pp. 499–500; Houtman and Sysling, *Alternative Targum Traditions*, p. 188.

along this line of interest, a different type of unmarked translation draws on the aggadic opportunities of verses, or even names.³²⁹ The borderline between translation and interpretation is well and truly blurred in the following example of Pes. K. 2.10:

זה יתנו כל העבר על הפקדים ... כל העובר ר' יודה ור' נחמיה ר' יודה אמ' כל דעבר
 בימא יתן ור' נחמיה אמ' כל דעבר על סכומייה יתן
 'This is what all who entered the records shall pay' (Exod. 30.13,14) ... 'All who
 entered'. R. Yuda said, All who passed through the sea shall pay. R. Neḥemya
 said, All who were counted shall pay.

What is at stake in this difference of opinion is the inclusion or not of the Levites, who should not be included in the census of the wilderness (Num. 1.49, cf. 1 Chron. 21.6). Are the Levites to pay, as R. Yuda suggests, or not, as R. Neḥemya implies? For R. Yuda the word העובר signals that both meanings should be included here, passing the Red Sea and entering the records. The views are recorded in Aramaic, which is marked since they continue to differ in opinion about the amount of payment in Hebrew, while it would have made no difference in terms of clarity had their debate been conducted in Hebrew. There might therefore be a slight hint of translation about the debate, as if lifted from elsewhere, were it not that there is a parallel in y. Sheq. 1.4, 46b where the exchange of views is placed within a larger Aramaic context.³³⁰ Aramaic presumably was the language used to debate the matter, rather than the language of any running translation, and the point of the 'translations' is neither lexical nor semantic but hermeneutical: are the Levites included or are they not?

An aggadic interest is at work in one Babylonian citation which is conspicuous for its substantial agreement with TgJon (b. San. 95a cited after Flor with the translation in italics):

מאי עוד היום בנוף לעמוד אמ' רב הונא אותו היום נישתייר מענווה של נוב אמרי ליה
 כלדאי אי אזלת האינדא יכלת ליה ואי לא לא יכלת ליה אורחא דבעי לסגויי בעשרה
 יומי סגא ביומא חד כי מטא ירושלים שדו ליה ביסתרקי סליק ויתבי מעילויה שורא עד
 דחזא כולה ירושלי' כידחזי אין דטר³³¹ בעיניה אמ' הדא היא קרתא דירושלי³³² דעלה

³²⁹For example, y. A. Zar. 3.3, 42c-d and b. San. 63b (2 Kgs 17.30-31).

³³⁰With a variant reading: סכומייה for פקודייה. The latter is supported by Tan. תשא 9 כי תשא and, as סכומה, by TgNeof in Exod. 30.13, but in 30.14 TgNeof agrees with TgOnq's מניינה.

³³¹Instead of אין דטר, read איזטר with Barco and Vilna. Mun95 has איזטר.

³³²The word דהדר, deleted in Flor, is not supported by Mun95, Barco or Vilna.

ארגישא³³³ כל משי' ועלה כניש' כל מדינתא הלא היא זעירא וחלה³³⁴ בכל כרכי עממי' דאיתבכ' ³³⁵ בתקוף ידי עלה וקס³³⁶ מניד ברישיה מוביל ומייתי בידי על טור מקדשא דיי ועל עזרתא דבירושלם אמ' נשדי ביה ידא האידנא אמ' להו האידנא תמהיתו מאורחא רחיקא למחר כל חד וחד מיניכו ליתי לי גולמא הרג מיניה מיד ויהי בחצי הלילה ויצא³³⁷ מלאך ייי ויך במחנה אשור מאה ושמונים וחמש' אלף וישכימו בבקר והנה כולם פגרים מתים אמ' רב פא היינו דאמרי אינשי בת דינא בטל דינא
What [is the meaning of the verse] 'This same day at Nob he shall stand' (Isa. 10.32).

Said Rav Huna, That very day was left for [punishing] the crime in Nob. The astrologers predicted to him, If you march now, you will overmaster it [Jerusalem]; if not, you will not overmaster it. [Accordingly,] he completed the journey that should have taken ten days in one day. When he reached Jerusalem, they piled up carpets for him. He ascended and sat on top of [this] wall [again and again] until he could see the whole of Jerusalem. When he saw it, it appeared insignificant to him. He said, Is this³³⁸ the city of Jerusalem, against which I stirred all my troops and subdued³³⁹ the entire country? Is it not smaller and weaker than all the fortified cities of the nations which are subdued by my might! He stood by it and shook his head, waved his hand toward the Temple in Zion, against the [Temple] Court in Jerusalem. They said, Let us throw [our] force against it now! He said to them, Now you are tired from your long journey,³⁴⁰ tomorrow each and everyone of you brings³⁴¹ me a lump of clay and kills with it.³⁴² Immediately, 'And it came to

³³³ Read ארגישית with Mun95 (abbreviated), Barco, Vilna and TgJon.

³³⁴ For וחלה, read וחלשא with Barco, Mun95^m, Vilna and TgJon. The phrase היא הלא היא זעירא וחלשא for TgJon's חלשא היא is partly supported by TgJon in t705, t10r and t11r.

³³⁵ Error in Flor, read דאיתכב' (Mun95, Barco and Vilna support דכבשית (Mun95 דכבשית). Flor differs from TgJon at this point unless a similar variant in the Tosefta-Targum turns up.

³³⁶ Reading קס עלה with Mun95 and TgJon (except A720) instead וקס in Flor, Barco and Vilna in which עלה must be presumed to be a Hebraism, which is unlikely at this position.

³³⁷ First hand ויאא, corrected into ויצא.

³³⁸ Flor and Mun95 support והיא, but the edns Barco and Vilna read דא הלא with TgJon.

³³⁹ Mun95, Barco and Vilna support כבשית 'subdued' rather than Flor's 'כניש'.

³⁴⁰ Mun95^m adds מאורחא, supporting half of Flor's reading רחיקא, while the running text has the plus דאיתתן; Barco and Vilna do not support either reading, although a marginal note in Vilna recommends the reading מאורחא.

³⁴¹ Flor's לית לי is not supported by Mun95, which reads לית (?) but also puts the imperative לית לי up front, as do Barco and Vilna: למחר אייתי לי כל חד וחד מיניכו.

³⁴² The text apparently became corrupted here. Levy, WTM, 1, p. 337, suggests the single word גולמוהרג as 'schwefelsaure Talkerde' < Persian gilmuhra. None of the witnesses

pass that night that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand: when they got up in the morning, they were all dead corpses' (2 Kgs 19.35).

R. Papa said: Thus men say: If the verdict is postponed overnight, it comes to nought.

While the vast majority of unmarked translations concern individual words, sometimes within lists, here we have a long aggadic expansion of Isa. 10.32 concerning Sennacherib's attack on Jerusalem, with a quotation which is apparently selected for its aggadic import.³⁴³ Despite a few variant readings, the overall agreement between Bavli and TgJon in the italicized passage between 'He said' and 'They said' is unmistakable.³⁴⁴ This nugget of Sennacherib-traditions fitted the talmudic series so nicely that it was lifted from TgJon—not the other way around, since in this shared section the Bavli changes from pure Babylonian Aramaic to the literary variety of TgJon, in morphology and vocabulary,³⁴⁵ only to return to JBA immediately afterwards.

The targum exists in different but related versions, with a shorter but still expansive Yemenite version on the one hand and distinct longer ones in the Italian, Sefardi and Ashkenazi texts.³⁴⁶ In תרל"ד, a marginal note appears to mark the translation as a Palestinian expansion, but there is no reason to consider this note as a first-hand tradition.³⁴⁷ Unlike Grelot's

available to me supports this reading, however (cf. n. 341 above), and on this assumption the remaining word מִיָּנִיָּה would remain awkward. Jastrow emends מִיָּנִיָּה into וְיִרְגְּמִיָּנָה (Dictionary, p. 222), following Yalq. S. Isa. §284. This suggestion would have much going for it, were it not that all our other witnesses are consistent in the reading הָרֵג מִיָּנִיָּה. Mun95 has metathesis in גִּמְלִי, Vilna and Barco read גִּלְמִי for Flor's גִּלְמָא.

³⁴³Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, pp. 132–33, 149; P. Grelot, 'Le Targoum d'Isaïe, x, 32–34 dans ses diverses recensions', *RB* 90 (1983), pp. 202–28; Smolar and Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan*, pp. 76–77. An additional fragment was published by A. Díez Macho, 'Un segundo fragmento del Targum Palestinense a los Profetas', *Biblica* 39 (1958), pp. 198–205.

³⁴⁴TgJon lacks קִרְתָּא, supported by Mun95, Flor, Barco and Vilna; TgJon reads דִּי עֵלָא, while the Bavli has דַּעְלָא; TgJon reads הָא where the Bavli reads הֵלָא. See further nn. 334, 338 and 339 above.

³⁴⁵In terms of JBA morphology, see כִּלְדָּאִי, הָאִידְנָא, לִסְגִּיָּי, בִּיטְתִּרְקִי, אִיזוּטִר, לִיטִי לִי (Flor; see n. 341). Sokoloff, *DJBA*, p. 717 argues מִשְׁרִיתָא is not part of JBA. That may be true, but it also occurs here before the citation of TgJon begins.

³⁴⁶Grelot, 'Le Targoum d'Isaïe'.

³⁴⁷Or to drop part of the expansion, as does B.D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (AB, 11; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), pp. 26–27.

maximising reconstruction, these versions do not necessarily reflect a single, all-inclusive but hypothetical Targum Yerushalmi.

The talmudic context is twofold. At the aggadic level, there are stories about Sennacherib, while at the halakhic level, this vignette is part of the cycle concerning those who have a portion in the World to Come. According to several stories, Sennacherib is not among them. However, the particular point conveyed here is that of the overall importance of timing. The talmudic focus is on the phrase עֹד הַיּוֹם, which is interpreted as an exclusive opening in time for an event that God intended to take place, here the punishment of the priests of Nob and the punishment of Jerusalem. Note the repetition of האִידנָה ‘now!’ throughout the passage. Rav Papa underlines this focus on a limited time-frame in his conclusion, ‘If the verdict is postponed overnight, it comes to nought’. In TgJon’s amplification of Isa. 10, Sennacherib’s underestimation of Jerusalem—and by implication, of God—leads him to miss his one window of destiny to capture the city.

The correspondence between TgJon and the Bavli concerns Sennacherib’s direct speech about the insignificance of Jerusalem; the Bavli’s motifs of astrologers and carpets has no parallel in TgJon, whereas TgJon’s recollection of his army’s size, his entourage and the miracles along the way to Jerusalem have no counterpart in the Bavli. In fact, TgJon passes over the topic of timing entirely. The two translations thus share one motif, but place it in different contexts. Although the Bavli here is a compilation, the citation is not necessarily an editorial or scribal add-on to an existing interpretative unit. The motif of Sennacherib’s underestimation of Jerusalem is pivotal to the plot, and may in fact have triggered the narrative as it stands.

8.7 Palestinian Targum

If translation into the vernacular accompanied the public recitation of Scripture by default, we would expect to find traces of such antiphonal practice in Amoraic literature of Palestinian provenance. Occurrences of Greek and Aramaic scriptural translation in Palestinian Aramaic in the Yerushalmi and the Midrashim do not come as a surprise, but the paucity of such citations does, and even more striking is the negative assessment which comes with a number of the marked Aramaic translations. It is therefore worthwhile to consider these citations in closer detail. Since

many of the relevant passages have received extensive discussion before, I will not pay extensive attention to their value as witnesses of a Palestinian Targum tradition in Palestine, their textual history or, unless relevant, their translation strategies. Instead, in view of the question how such translational traditions were received among the Palestinian rabbis, I will focus on their evaluation and the way these translations are embedded in their rabbinic co-texts. The following instances illustrate the cool reception of the Palestinian Targumic tradition.

In Gen. R. 61.5 R. Shmuel b. Nahman cites a translation which agrees with the Palestinian Targum of Gen. 25.3 (TgNeof, TgPsJ and FragTg with only minor variation):³⁴⁸

ויוקשן ילד את שבא ואת דדן ובני דדן היו אשורים ולטושים ולאומים ר' שמואל בר נחמן אמר אפעלגב דאינון מתרגמין ואמרין תגרין ואנפרין וראשי אומין כולהם ראשי אומות הם

'Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. The descendants of Dedan were the Asshurim, the Letushim, and the Leummim' (Gen. 25.3). R. Shmuel b. Nahman said, Although they translate and say, 'merchants, artificers and tribal chiefs', yet they were all chiefs of peoples.

The translation of the gentilic names of 'the Asshurim, the Letushim, and the Leummim' takes their exceptional plural forms as an indication that these were not ethnic names but professions. The cited translation agrees with the Palestinian Targums³⁴⁹ and, to an extent, with Jerome's comments on this verse.³⁵⁰ Shinan emphasizes, with Albeck, the importance of the word דאינון in this citation,³⁵¹ which is attested in all textual witnesses (minor variations left aside): rather than saying, 'those who translate', this midrash takes aim at all translators. Thus we have a Palestinian Amora of the third century CE rejecting a translation found in the Palestinian Targum. R. Shmuel b. Nahman's comment, that all of the three names in

³⁴⁸E. Cashdan, 'Names and the Interpretation of Names in the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum to the Book of Genesis', in H.J. Zimmels, J. Rabinowitz and L. Fineststein (eds.), *Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (London: Soncino, 1967), pp. 31–39 (38); McNamara, *The New Testament*, pp. 54–56; McNamara, 'Some Early Rabbinic Citations', pp. 8–9; B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (AB, 6; Wilmington: The Liturgical Press, 1988), p. 95 n. 1.

³⁴⁹TgNeof, TgPsJ, and with ואומין for ואמפורין, FragTg^{NLV}.

³⁵⁰See McNamara, *The New Testament*, pp. 54–56.

³⁵¹A. Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים*, I, pp. 10–11; J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *מדרש בראשית*, מדרש בראשית (3 vols.; repr. Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1996), II, pp. 50, 663.

the Hebrew represent national leaders does not agree with TgOnq either, which offers the translation *למשרין ולשכונין ולגוון* '[inhabitants of] camps, tents, and islands'.

A second example of a citation which gains no rewards is the interpretation of Lev. 22.28 in a discussion of the Amida. This fragment is one of the most frequently discussed citations, not least because of a well-known parallel in the sayings of Jesus;³⁵² to avoid unnecessary overlap, I will keep its discussion to a minimum. The starting point of the talmudic discussion is m. Ber. 5.3:

האומר על קן ציפור (ה) [י]גיעו רחמך ועל טוב יזכר שמך מודים מודים משתקים אותו
[As for] one who says, 'May your mercy reach the nest of a bird' or 'For good may your name be mentioned', 'We give thanks, we give thanks'—they silence him.

There are several, and distinct, reasons behind this *mishna*. The last two statements could be construed in a way that implies dual powers in heaven (whether gnostic or Christian), thanking two powers, or not attributing evil to the one and only God. Whether the first statement should be read in the same light, as Urbach suggests, is less clear.³⁵³ Urbach believes that the statement was deemed offensive because it did not keep the dual attributes of mercy and justice together. There is some justification for this viewpoint. When the Bavli wonders why the first statement, 'May your mercy reach the nest of a bird', is deemed offensive (b. Ber. 33b), it initially answers this question by citing two Palestinian Amoraim, R. Yose b. Avin and R. Yose b. Zevida, whose concern is twofold: the statement 'May your mercy reach the nest of a bird' might suggest a bias and limitation in God's compassion, while on the other hand it is deemed wrong to seek a rationale to justify the commandments, which are decrees, not expressions of mercy. The *gemara* further highlights the impossibility to do God justice in his attributes, as illustrated by a narrative about a reader who used an endless series of attributes and still fell short.

³⁵² In the Sermon on the Mount according to Matt. 5.48 (with a variation on the theme) and Luke 6.36. See, e.g., A.T. Olmstead, 'Could an Aramaic Gospel Be Written?', JNES 1 (1942), p. 64; M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford University Press, 3rd edn 1967), p. 181; McNamara, *The New Testament*, pp. 133–38; Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 452–54; Goshen-Gottstein, *מקרא, שיעורים מתרגומי המקרא*, I, pp. 51–53; Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים*, I, p. 7 n. 28; II, pp. 193–94; Shinan, *מקרא אחד*, pp. 22–23.

³⁵³ Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 453–54.

In the Yerushalmi,³⁵⁴ R. Pinḥas and R. Yose take similar positions: the former considers the challenged blessing an unwelcome restriction of God's mercy, excluding all that is beyond the nest. R. Yose, however, argues that the blessing limits God's attributes. Then R. Yose be-Rabbi Bun, one of the last important halakhic scholars of the fifth generation of Palestinian Amoraim from the school of Caesarea, cites an offensive Aramaic translation of Lev. 22.28, which, when recited, should result in a rebuke of the translator (y. Ber. 5.3, 9c):

ר' «פינחס»³⁵⁵ בשם ר' סימון כקורא תיגר על מדותיו שלהקב"ה על ק(ח) ציפור הגיעו רחמין ועל אותו האיש לא הגיעו רחמין ר' יוסי בשם ר' סימון כנותן קיצבה למדותיו שלהקב"ה עד קן ציפור הגיעו רחמין אית תניי תני על ואית תניי תני עד מאן דמר על מסייע לר' פינחס ומן דמר עד מסייע לר' יוסי אמ' ר' יוסי ביר' בון לא עבדין טבות שעושין למדותיו שלהקב"ה רחמים ואילין דמתרגמין עמי בני³⁵⁶ יש' כמא דאנא רחמן בשמיא כך תהוו³⁵⁷ רחמנין בארעא תורתא או רחילה יתה וית ברה לא תיכסון תרויהון ביומא חד לא עבדין טבאות שהן עושין מדותיו שלהקב"ה רחמים R. Pinḥas in the name of R. Simon. It is as crying 'partiality' over the attributes of the Holy One blessed be He, [saying] 'to a bird's nest your mercy extends, but your mercy does not extend to me!'

Rabbi Yose in the name of R. Simon, [It is as if] someone sets a limit to the attributes of the Holy One blessed be He, 'to a bird's nest your mercy extends'. One Tanna teaches 'over' (על), another Tanna teaches 'to' (עד).

Who says 'over' supports R. Pinḥas, who says 'to' supports R. Yose.

Said Rabbi Yose be-Rabbi Bun, They do not do well, who infer the attributes of the Holy One blessed be He [from] mercy. And those who translate, 'My people, the children of Israel, as I am merciful in heaven, so shall you be merciful on earth: a cow or a ewe, you shall not slaughter both her and her child on one day' (Lev. 22.28), do not do well, as they infer the attributes of the Holy One blessed be He [from] mercy [only].

³⁵⁴The same tradition, attested by all textual witnesses in y. Ber. 5.3, 9c, also occurs in y. Meg. 4.10(9), 75c according to Ven1523, but in ms Scal3 it is added by a second hand, and in the Constantinople edn it is lacking. For variant readings, see Goshen-Gottstein, שקיעים, מתרגומי המקרא, 1, pp. 51–53, who exaggerates their importance.

³⁵⁵So Vat133. Scal3 reads יצחק, supported by the Krotoshin edn; however, פינחס is implied in this sugya.

³⁵⁶ms Vat133 reads בית. Such variations are common in targumic mss.

³⁵⁷ms Vat133 reads כן אתון, which Goshen-Gottstein emphasizes, as it implies that Israel's attributes are like God's already in the present. It is questionable, however, whether so much can be read into this variant reading.

To infer God's attributes from mercy is to ignore the legal nature of the commandments, or in other words justice. Whether or not this rebuke is directed against the notion of dual powers remains to be seen, as this passage could equally polemicize against Christian accusations of legalism. The Aramaic translation denounced here occurs nearly verbatim in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan whilst a related addition to the Amida occurs in Babylonian versions of the prayer. McNamara even argues that this translation was an integral part of all Palestinian Targums before they fell victim to rabbinic censorship,³⁵⁸ although it can also be argued, that its inclusion in TgPsJ is due to a rekindled interest in rebutting Christian attempts to monopolize the concept of mercy during the late Byzantine period. Nonetheless, it is obvious that some early rabbis did commit the very offence that the Yerushalmi singles out. It should be noted that the Bavli has Rabba praise a student, who went before the ark and said, 'You have shown mercy to the bird's nest, show your compassion and mercy to us'. The anonymous conclusion to this episode tries to neutralize his deviant view unconvincingly ('Rabba, too, only wanted to test Abaye'). The Yerushalmi cites the introduction to this translation, 'My people, the children of Israel', which points to a liturgical context.³⁵⁹

Two oral-performative interpreters take the brunt of R. Yoḥanan for their translations of Gen. 29.17. The first translation is found in Gen. R. 70.16:³⁶⁰

ועיני לאה רכות אמורא דר' יוחנן תרגם קדמוהי³⁶¹ עיניא דלאה הוו רכיכין אמר ליה עיניא דאמך הוו רכיכין זו מהו רכות רכות מבכיה שכך היו התנאין שיהא גדול לגדולה וקטן לקטנה והיתה בוכה ואומרת יהי רצון שלא תיפול בחלק עשו הרשע אמר ר' הונה גדולה תפילה שבטלה הגזירה ולא עוד אלא שקדמה לאחותה
'And Leah's eyes were weak (רכות) (Gen. 29.17). The spokesman of R. Yoḥanan translated before him, 'And Leah's eyes were soft'. He said to him, Your mother's eyes were soft! But what does רכות mean? Weak from weeping, for such was the arrangement, the elder daughter [Leah] is for the elder son [Esau], and the younger daughter [Rachel] for the younger son [Jacob], while she used

³⁵⁸ McNamara, *The New Testament*, pp. 137–38.

³⁵⁹ See esp. Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים*, II, pp. 192–96; cf. Ellbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst*, pp. 188, 192.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Sokoloff, *קטעי בראשית רבה*, p. 154. P. Churgin, 'The Targum and the Septuagint', *AJSJL* 50 (1933–1934), p. 63; McNamara, *The New Testament*, pp. 53–54; Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים*, I, pp. 8–9.

³⁶¹ The reading קדמוהי in the Theodor-Albeck edn is a typo.

to weep and pray, 'May it be your will that I do not fall to the lot of Esau the Wicked'. Said R. Huna, Great is prayer, that it annulled the decree and she even took precedence of her sister.

MT's רכות would appear to denote a lack of fire in Leah's eyes, which the verse contrasts with Rachel's beautiful shape and face. Sparkling eyes were highly valued in the Ancient Near East.³⁶² But R. Yoḥanan would have none of this and berates the hapless interpreter for the literal translation he offers in the form of the Aramaic cognate רכיכין, which agrees with FragTg^{PVNL} and TgNeof^{mg}.³⁶³ By contrast, TgOnq, TgNeof and TgPsJ all display a noticeable sensitivity about a disparagingly literal interpretation of Leah's appearance, yet none of their solutions agrees with R. Yoḥanan. TgOnq subtly illustrates this attitude in its converse translation ועיני לאה יאין 'Now Leah's eyes were lovely'.³⁶⁴ The Aramaic יאי avoids the impression that Leah's eyes were just passable or somehow spoiled by a defect. Conversely, TgNeof emphasizes Leah's inner beauty by claiming that Leah's eyes were lifted in prayer, asking that she be married to Jacob the Righteous'. Leah's request implies an expectation that she will be married out to someone else who remains anonymous, but the prospective husband was traditionally well-known; FragTg and TgNeof^{mg} have Leah pray that she does not end up in Esau's lot, as does R. Yoḥanan.³⁶⁵

TgPsJ offers a fourth interpretation: ועיני לאה הוון צירנייתן דבכיא ובעיא 'Now Leah's eyes were bleary from crying and she begged the LORD that He would not destine her for Esau the Wicked'. While the sentiment is similar to TgNeof, TgPsJ's version is not a description of beauty, not even in the religious sense. R. Yoḥanan's explanation precipitates that of TgPsJ in the reference to the wedding arrangements which would have had Leah end up with Esau the Wicked were it not for the power of prayer. However, TgPsJ's rendition of MT's

³⁶² See 1 Sam. 16.12; Cant. 4.1, 9; b. Taan. 24a.

³⁶³ FragTg^V reads רכיכין. TgNeof^{mg} reads: רכיכין במזליה דלא תסוק. דעשו ורחל.

³⁶⁴ For this translation strategy, see M.L. Klein, 'Converse Translation: A Targumic Technique', *Biblica* 57 (1976), pp. 515–37. The description is similar to Sara's beauty in 1Q20 l. 3 and that of the King Messiah in TgNeof Gen. 49.12: משיחא דמלכא עיניו יאין.

³⁶⁵ See also TgCG^E; b. B. Bat. 123a; TanB. ויצא 12.

רכות with צירייתן³⁶⁶ 'bleary' does not meet with his approval either, as appears from TanB. ויצא 20:

ועיני לאה רכות תרגם מתורגמניה³⁶⁷ של ר' יוסי מהו רכות צירניות א"ל ר' יוחנן לא תרגמת יפה ומהו רכות ארוכות שכל מה שנתן לה הקב"ה היו ארוכות כהונה גדולה ומלכות ושמן המשחה

'And Leah's eyes were weak' (Gen. 29.17). The spokesman of Rabbi Yose interpreted, What does 'weak' mean? Bleary. Said R. Yoḥanan to him, You did not translate well, what is weak? Long. All the gifts that the Holy One blessed be He presented to her were long-lived: the high priesthood, kingship and ointment oil.

While R. Yoḥanan rejects the translation now found in TgPsJ, his tone is milder than on the previous occasion, possibly because the *meturgeman's* translation redresses the perceived lack of respect for Leah by transforming her lack of beauty into a physical expression of grief—an interpretative move which actually follows part of R. Yoḥanan's interpretation as given in the previous passage. His opposition presumably does not follow from complete disagreement with the proffered translation, but for his insistence that a tearful Leah by itself, even if her crying may not distract from her beauty,³⁶⁸ does not explain things nearly well enough. His own interpretation—in Hebrew—is built on the graphic similarity between רכות and ארוכות, a well-established hermeneutic strategy, to avoid any blemish on Leah's beauty and, by the same token, to instil a sense of her inner, religious beauty into the text because she was rewarded with gifts to her offspring that would last: kingship, the high priesthood and ointment oil. This latter element was missing from the *meturgeman's* translation with 'dreary'. Thus both the translations of FragTg (= TgNeof^{mg}) and TgPsJ are explicitly rejected by one of the foremost Palestinian rabbis.

Despite these rejections, conversely, some citations indicate approval of translations now found in extant Palestinian Targums, although they are not introduced by any of the markers discussed so far and may not reflect actual citations. Before Gen. R. 31.8 makes the point that only in Hebrew

³⁶⁶The meaning of צירייתן is not clear. I follow Jastrow, Dictionary, p. 1281; cf. Levy, CWT, II, p. 323.

³⁶⁷Most MSS, however, read אמורא here.

³⁶⁸Cf. TanB. ויצא 12: כרחל יפה שהיתה לא שהיתה כעורה מרחל אלא שהיתה יפה כרחל. 'Why was she disliked? Not because she was uglier than Rachel. Indeed, she was as beautiful as Rachel'.

related words like man and woman, bronze and snake, have an 'etymological' relationship,³⁶⁹ a passage is brought up which is not interpreted by another Hebrew verse—and as such defies the inner-Scriptural mode of exposition—but simply explained in Aramaic (*editio princeps*):

עשה לך תיבת וגו' אמר רבי נתן תיבותא דאעין דקדרינון
'Make yourself an ark of gopherwood' (Gen. 6.14), etc. Said R. Natan, An ark
[made out] of beams of cedar.

As McNamara points out, R. Natan explains the hapax of גפר in MT by the words תיבותא דאעין דקדרינון, which almost literally agree with TgNeof and FragTg^{PVNL};³⁷⁰ TgPsJ reads תיבותא דקיסין קדרינון. Pseudo-Philo and Symmachus provide a similar translation with *arca de lignis cedrinis* and ἐκ ξύλων κεδρίνων respectively, so that R. Natan presumably cites an extant lexical tradition.³⁷¹ However, McNamara apparently cites the *editio princeps* of the Midrash, as quoted above. He does not mention that דקדרינון is the Greek loanword κέδρινος,³⁷² although he notes that the word 'is of very rare occurrence' in rabbinic literature. While the Greek loanword is attested in all mss, most of them omit תיבותא ד-,³⁷³ which opens the possibility that the edition was adapted after the PalTg which would have been very well-known to the printers from the *humash*. For all we know, FragTg^P only cites the Greek loanword. At the end of the day, what we have here is certainly a Greek lexical equivalent of a Hebrew hapax, but not necessarily a citation of a Palestinian Targum.³⁷⁴

Similarly, the Aramaic translation of Exod. 24.10 found in both y. Suk. 4.3(5),54c and Lev. R. 23.8 is Palestinian (citing the former):³⁷⁵

תני בר קפרא עד שלא נגאלו יש' ממצרים היתה רשומה ברקיע משנגאלו עוד לא נראית
ברקיע מה טע' וכעצם השמים לטוהר שמייא כד אינון נקיין מן עננין
Taught Bar Qappara, As long as Israel was not exiled from Egypt, [the
sapphire brick] was marked in the firmament, but after they had been exiled

³⁶⁹ See above, p. 20.

³⁷⁰ FragTg^P only attests the last word, but FragTg^V the entire phrase. FragTg^{LN} are not cited by Klein as disagreeing with FragTg^V; see Klein, *The Fragment-Targums*, I, pp. 48, 130.

³⁷¹ McNamara, *The New Testament*, p. 52.

³⁷² See Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, p. 500. Some mss read דקדרינון (metathesis).

³⁷³ Only the Venice edn and ms Ox51 cite the full phrase of the PalTg.

³⁷⁴ The translation אעין for 'wood' is hardly distinctive.

³⁷⁵ McNamara, *The New Testament*, p. 53.

it was no longer seen in the firmament. What was the reason? 'Like the very sky for purity' (Exod. 24.10), the heavens when they are clear from clouds.

The translation of Exod. 24.10 agrees with TgNeof and FragTg, but not TgPsJ or TgOnq. Strictly speaking, the translation of the cited Hebrew words skips the first word, וּכְעֵס, which TgNeof and FragTg^{VNL} render with וכחזוי while FragTg^P renders it with וכיככיות; consequently, the interest in these passages concerns the lexical meaning of the cited scriptural phrase, not the correct quotation of an extant translation. What this passage attests is an ongoing interest in lexical translation, and the willingness to use either Aramaic or Greek to shed light on obscure or controversial Hebrew clauses, but not an appreciation of extant Aramaic versions.

Finally, a similar lexical interest occurs in Gen. R. 59.11, where MT's וְכָל אֲדָמִי טֹב אֲדָמִי (Gen. 24.10) is explained as follows: ר' חלבו אמר זו דייתיקי, 'Said R. Helbo, That is the covenant'. In FragTg^P this phrase is, indeed, rendered with the same Greek loanword דייתיקא under the heading נ"א; however, as Klein indicates, these words have been misplaced,³⁷⁶ hence supplemented by a copyist, especially since FragTg^{VNL} read אפותיקה דריבוניה (ה). The very fact that the Arukh cites the same lexical equivalent is irrelevant; this is not a citation, and for the sake of argument, even if it were, it is not a citation of PalTg but a Greek equivalent.³⁷⁷

It goes without saying that wherever the extant Palestinian Targums are not explicitly cited in early rabbinic literature, they often chime in well with the general tenor of rabbinic interpretation. Such agreement tells us something about these Targums' milieu, but does not necessarily reveal their reception history in rabbinic circles. One tradition, preserved at two places in the Yerushalmi, merits our special attention as it cites three translations to reject them in favour of one which is almost unanimously shared by TgOnq and the Palestinian Targums. The following text is that of y. Meg. 4.1, 74d (par. y. Bik. 3.8[5], 65d):

והתרגום מעכב אמ' ר' יוסה מן מה דאנן חמיין רבנן נפקין לתעניתא וקראיי ולא מתרגמין הדא אמרה שאין התרגום מעכב אמ' ר' יונה אע"ג דאת אמר אין התרגום מעכב טעה מחזירין אותו ר' יונה ר' ירמיה חד מחזר מנא וחורנה מחזר פטירין עם ירקונין נאמר פטירין עם מרורין ולא ידעין מאן אמ' דא ומאן אמ' דא מן מה דאמ' ר'

³⁷⁶ Klein, *The Fragment-Targums*, p. 55.

³⁷⁷ Contrast McNamara, *The New Testament*, p. 56.

יִנָּה]ה[³⁷⁸ מהו להביאן בתמחויין שלכסף הוי דהוא מחזר מנא ויאמר סלא ר' פינחס מחזר פטימין בני תורין ויאמר תורין בני תורין

Does the translation invalidate [the reading of Esther in Hebrew when the oral-performative translation is omitted]?

R. Yose said, On the basis of what we see, namely, rabbis going forth to a fast and reading [the scroll of Esther] without translating it, it is to be inferred that translation does not invalidate.

R. Yona said, Even though you maintain that the translation does not invalidate, [if] he made a mistake, they make him go back [and correct it].

R. Yona, Yirmeya. One of them had the translator redo 'vessel'.

The other had the translator redo 'unleavened bread with various herbs' (Exod. 12.8).

He had him say, 'Unleavened bread with bitter herbs'.

Now we do not know which one said this and which one said that.

On the basis of that which R. Yona said, What is the law about bringing the first fruits in trays made of silver, it would follow that he is the one who had the translator correct himself if he used the word 'vessel'. He had the translator say [the Aramaic word for] 'basket'.

R. Pinḥas had the translator go back and correct himself if he said, 'Fatlings and young bulls', to take it back and correct it to read, 'bulls, young bulls'.

Each of the translations offered by anonymous interpreters were deemed too unspecific in view of the halakhic importance which the exact identification of the words in question has for the fulfilment of three commandments (two of which were obsolete after the destruction of the Temple): the offering of the first fruits, the bitter herbs eaten with Pesach and the sacrifice for the new moon. All of the named rabbis, R. Yona, Yirmeya and R. Pinḥas, are fourth century CE Palestinian Amoraim, evidently dealing with oral-performative translations in Aramaic. The faulted translations are hypernyms of those prescribed by the three named rabbis: vessel::wicker basket, herbs::bitter herbs, and fatlings::bulls.³⁷⁹ Which Hebrew lemmata these translations represent has not been indicated; although the Hebrew equivalents may have been deemed clear enough,³⁸⁰ it is perhaps closer to

³⁷⁸Omitted by the scribe, another hand supplied יִנָּה between the lines which a third hand corrected into יִנָּה.

³⁷⁹Both hyponyms and hypernyms occur frequently as equivalents in TgOnq and TgJon. Hypernyms are, for example, reed::papyrus; messenger::angel, or messenger::agent. Hyponyms: choice grapes::vine, migratory locust (*schistocerca gregaria*):locust.

³⁸⁰See, however, p. 426 n. 389 below.

the truth to assume that the context of these three cases was clipped in the process of textual transmission, whether that transmission was oral, written or a combination of both.

In tractate Megilla, the context is reading and translating the Hebrew Bible, and in particular the question whether the translation invalidates the reading if absent or flawed. The three cases illustrate the principle that the reading of the Hebrew text is not invalidated by the translation, yet any mistake the interpreter makes (in the eyes of the rabbis) must be corrected by having him go over the same word once again, now reciting the accepted version. The three examples all concern a named rabbi who forced an anonymous interpreter to redo his translation, and are therefore all relevant to the discussion. In tractate Bikkurim, the context is that of the first fruits declaration; here, the first case dealing with the vessels in which the first fruits were handed over to the priests at the Temple is relevant, but the following two cases are superfluous. The context of reading and translating in Megilla is the more natural 'home' for this block of traditions, as it is relevant to all three cases cited. But it still seems likely that we have a 'flowing' tradition here, brought to bear upon the in itself secondary question whether reading without translation invalidated the reading itself. The confusion about the attribution of the first two corrections is resolved by the reference to R. Yona's question,³⁸¹ רבי יונה בעי מהו להביאן בתמחויין של כסף, 'R. Yona asked, What is the rule for bringing the first fruits in silver trays?' This question, taken from tractate Bikkurim where it appears twice, first introducing the block of corrections, then within this block as a resolution of the confused attribution, suggested that R. Yona was concerned with the type of vessel for the first fruit offering. As the texts stand, this cannot be denied internal logic, since the correction is the only answer given to R. Yona's question about silver trays. But his correction is not given immediately, unlike the tradition about Yirmeya whose correction is given immediately with the faulted translation. Thus this block may have started out as a tradition about the attribution of two translation corrections, which became linked to R. Yona's question in Bikkurim and the translation of Hebrew טנא, while R. Pinḥas's tradition was added later on. Thus the origin of the block is neither to be found in

³⁸¹ Cited after the fuller version of y. Bik. 3.8(5), 65d; in y. Meg. the name of the Rabbi and the verb בעי are missing.

Bikkurim nor in Megilla, but the final form focuses on corrections, which is the co-text of Megilla.

The first pair of translations, מנא and סלא, reflects the Egyptian loanword טנא in Deut. 26.2, 4; 28.5, 17,³⁸² all extant Targums read סלא here (unlike the Samaritan Targum which agrees with the rejected version).³⁸³ These nouns denote the vessel in which the first fruits are presented to the priests. The faulted translation is the common targumic equivalent for the Hebrew כלי 'vessels',³⁸⁴ which is less specific, but this hypernym is used elsewhere in rabbinic literature. Sifre Deut. 298 simply states that כלי are required, the same term used by the Tosefta;³⁸⁵ the main stipulation is that the first-fruits must be brought in a vessel. The Mishna indicates that two types of containers were used: the קלתות 'bowls' of silver or gold, or baskets of stripped willow twigs (m. Bik. 3.8). The Yerushalmi refers to silver תמחוי 'trays', which are presumably identical to the קלתות (y. Bik. 3.8[5], 65d).³⁸⁶ R. Yona, however, prefers the specific translation סלא and rejects מנא which might have included the תמחוי and thus he restricts the range of permitted vessels to the wicker basket, which tallies with his rhetorical question in Bikkurim whether silver trays are permitted: רבי יונה בעי מהו להביאן בתמחויין של כסף.

As for the second case,³⁸⁷ the translation with 'herbs' is considered too inclusive. There was a sustained discussion which vegetables and herbs qualified as the bitter herbs which were required to fulfil the commandment on the basis of Exod. 12.8. TgOnq, TgNeof and TgCG follow Yirmeya, while TgPsJ has ופטיר על תמכה ועולשן 'unleavened bread with chervil and endives', two herbs explicitly mentioned and accepted in m. Pes. 2.6.³⁸⁸

³⁸²T.O. Lambdin, 'Egyptian Loanwords in the OT', JAOS 73 (1953), pp. 145–(159).

³⁸³As pointed out by Goshen-Gottstein, המקרא מתרגומי המקרא, I, p. 55. He wonders whether we have here a difference of opinion between Jews and Samaritans, observing that R. Yona was the student of R. Abahu, during whose life the Samaritans were separated from Israel. However, the other two examples do not relate to the Samaritans, and the more generic translation is, in fact, attested in other Jewish sources.

³⁸⁴Ch.Y. Kasovsky, קונקורדנציה: אונקלוס: אוצר לשון תרגום (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986), I, pp. 279–80. The translation סלא is common for both סל and טנא (pp. 341–42).

³⁸⁵t. Bik. 2.8 likewise speaks of כלי 'vessels'.

³⁸⁶Cf. b. B. Qam. 92a.

³⁸⁷Cf. Goshen-Gottstein, המקרא מתרגומי המקרא, I, pp. 62–63.

³⁸⁸The same tradition in TgCant. 2.9; cf. y. Pes. 2.6, 29c and b. Pes. 39a.

The third translation which does not stand the test of scrutiny, פטימין, תורין בני בקר for פרים בני בקר in Num. 28.11 and elsewhere,³⁸⁹ would not seem implausible on the basis of the targumic evidence, since the phrase תורין פטימין occurs in TgJon as a translation of שור ומריא,³⁹⁰ while פר is at least once rendered with the noun פטים.³⁹¹ As Goshen-Gottstein points out,³⁹² the halakhic Midrashim were divided in their exact interpretation of the Hebrew term, a question which centred upon how old the פר was. The rejected translation seems to relate the bull to its growth and shape rather than to its age. The exact morphological form of the prescribed translation agrees with TgNeof.³⁹³

Each example is reflected in the extant Targums, none of which can be identified as the sole specimen of these halakhic opinions. The translations in the Yerushalmi reflect academic searches for lexical precision, which were brought to bear upon the liturgical translation. The extant Targums show clear signs of rabbinic influence.

It goes without saying that there are also some citations which are cited without disapproval. In discussing the boundaries of the second narrative about the Golden calf in Exodus, R. Aḥa quotes in the name of R. Ba the first four words of TgOnq Exod. 32.35, ויית עמא 'And the LORD struck the people' (y. Meg. 4.10[11], 75c). These words have been rendered in TgNeof, too, followed by the Hebrew text for the rest of the verse. But we cannot take for granted that the Yerushalmi really cites TgOnq at this point. All the Aramaic equivalents are standard and far from surprising, hence do not point to any specific tradition; he might have rendered these words himself. Moreover, TgOnq also translates the remainder of the verse, in contrast to R. Aḥa; at this point, his view agrees with TgNeof, who also refrains from rendering anything beyond these four words. Another example concerns Targum Psalms in Tan. פקודי 1:

ירושלים הבנויה כעיר שחברה לה יחדו כלומר כעיר שבנה יה ותרגם ירושלמי דמתבניא
ברקיע כקרתא לאתחברה כחדא בארעא

³⁸⁹Num. 28.11 etc. is identified as the source text by Goshen-Gottstein, שקיעים מתרגומי, 1, p. 67. See further Num. 28.19, 27; 29.13, 17. Note that TgOnq Lev. 1.14 differs from the translation R. Pinḥas suggested: מן שפניינא או מן בני יונה.

³⁹⁰See TgJon 2Sam 6.13; 1 Kgs 1.9, 19, 25.

³⁹¹See TgPs 69.32.

³⁹²Goshen-Gottstein, שקיעים מתרגומי המקרא, 1, p. 67.

³⁹³TgNeof (except in 28.17, where it has a haplography; but see 29.13, 17 etc.): תורין בני (in Num. 28.17 TgPsJ agrees with TgOnq); תורין בני תורי; תורי בני תורי; תורי בני תורי; תורי בני תורי.

'Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together' (Ps. 122.3), that is to say, as a city that the LORD built, and [according to] Targum Yerushalmi, '[A city] which was built in the firmament, as the city that is to be joined together [with her] on earth'.

The citation agrees with TgPs 122.3, with some variations, and espouses a theologoumenon not unknown from other rabbinic sources, notably Midr. Ps. 122.4. Unfortunately, it is not straightforward to date this citation, which may well postdate the far more critical stance witnessed in the other quotations discussed above. Together, these examples do not countenance the impact of the negative examples cited above.

8.8 The footage of targum in Talmud

This chapter found its impetus in the absence of a comprehensive study of the rabbinic citations of translations, but most of all in the awareness that those studies that exist curiously overlooked the full impact of their rabbinic context. It is perhaps understandable that most scholars succumbed to the temptation to compare these translations with the extant translations of Late Antiquity, whether the Targums or the Hexapla, without focusing on how these citations are formally embedded in their present discursive contexts in rabbinic literature or on the function they serve in those contexts, but as a consequence they ran the risk of misinterpreting the available evidence, as has been demonstrated in a number of passages analysed above. The study of these citations in their context is not only relevant for the rabbinic use and perception of such translations, but such use also sheds a different light on those occasions where differences occur between the citations and the ancient versions. A further incentive to study these rabbinic citations is the available manuscript evidence of which those studies that exist have been oblivious, although the evidence at times provides a radical new perspective on the way these citations function at the literary and diachronical level.

Several aspects of the citations call for highlighting at the end of this survey. First, the preponderance of rabbinic citations of Aquila's translations in the West (Yerushalmi, Midrashim) over against Aramaic quotations in the East (Bavli) does not come as a surprise. The preserved Aquila traditions that translated to the East are narrative mainly, and were subjected to a sustained process of appropriation and actualization, both

in the West and in the East (as the next chapter will demonstrate in closer detail). Neither has it escaped the attention of previous scholars that some of the Aramaic scriptural translations in the Talmud differ from those preserved in the extant Targums, although the extent and depth of the differences have certainly not always, if ever, been fully appreciated.

More significant are the results of collation in the shape of variant readings that change the perspective on quite a few citations. This change is most obvious wherever citations did not occur in the majority of textual witnesses and were exposed as scribal additions during the process of textual transmission. Thus Rav Yoseph's citations of a *targum* to the Writings turned out to be as pseudepigraphic as the traditional nomer 'Targum of Rav Yoseph' for TgWritings.³⁹⁴ The variant readings for one of his translations of the Prophets in b. A. Zar. 44a, marked by the unusual prepositive position of the verb תרגם, as well as the phrase 'as we translate', suggest that the original use of the verb in that particular instance marked a halakhic interpretation rather than scriptural translation—although the translation was eventually supplied by a keen glossator and spread to a number of witnesses. Similarly, the citations 'as we translate' in the early Midrashim are not always shared by the manuscripts, and since the formulation of the marker is Babylonian, not Palestinian, they almost certainly represent scribal additions. (This is true for the early Midrashim, not necessarily for later ones where borrowings of traditions could take place at the formative stage of the text.) Another instance of 'as we translate' in b. M. Qat. 2a found its way in two maxims in some manuscripts, but only one in others. Similarly, Rav Yoseph's translation in b. Ber. 28a joined with one rabbi's statement and topic in some witnesses, with another rabbi and another topic in others, along with other floating elements, suggesting that the citation of his translation represents a relatively late, albeit most propitious, afterthought—with the translation itself quite possibly older than the date of its incorporation into the text. The textcritical evidence itself suggests an interest in citing translations during the late editorial and post-editorial stages (stages we still cannot, to be sure, confidently separate), an impression strengthened by the discursive nature of many translations.

Third, a remarkable distribution emerged of the citations 'as Rav Yoseph translates' and 'as we translate'. Virtually all marked quotations

³⁹⁴b. Sot. 48b; b. Naz. 3a.

from a Targum to the Prophets hail from Rav Yoseph. Conversely, virtually all quotations marked 'as we translate' concern Targum Onqelos. The two citations of TgJon under the marker 'we translate' turned out to be absent in most of the textual witnesses or firmly embedded in the editorial framework of a tractate's opening and, as such, late additions to the text. Such lateness is interesting primarily because it means that at the formative stage of the discourse the translation did not play a role, but at the consolidating level it emerges as a source of knowledge.

Yet perhaps even more remarkable than this odd bifurcation of the frequency and distribution of cited translations is the difference in discursive weight that these translations intimate. Rav Yoseph's citations of an Aramaic version of the Prophets—which is not identical to TgJon in three instances—are less informative than his three citations of the way 'we translate' the Tora. None of Rav Yoseph's translations of the Prophets make any real mark on the train of thought in their context. Among the three citations which differ from TgJon, the only one which assumes a central position, in b. Ber. 28a, is also the one which floats between the arguments of two sages in the manuscripts and is simultaneously central and peripheral. In b. Qid. 72b, his citation of TgJon is styled after its new talmudic context, where it is inserted in what was an old Palestinian unit—of which the argument thus stood before the translation came to confirm it. And in b. A. Zar. 44a the citation was revealed as a late scribal activity on closer investigation, in which his name and the verb for halakhic interpretation, תרגם, triggered the addition of a translation 'as we translate', fusing two distinct markers of citations.³⁹⁵

Likewise, the three citations which Rav Yoseph praises explicitly, for he would not have understood the Scriptures without them, are all relatively late appearances in the text. The citation of b. San. 94b turned out to be completely irrelevant for the talmudic topic under discussion, entering the text only because of an elliptic biblical reference, and having relevance only for the immaterial part of that reference.³⁹⁶ Those in b. Meg. 3a and b. M. Qat. 28b, which are identical although their context is not, belong to the anonymous voice, and one that is not early but late. The eight remaining instances of 'Rav Yoseph translates' have their place without playing any

³⁹⁵b. Ber. 28a; b. Qid. 72b; see also b. A. Zar. 44a.

³⁹⁶b. San. 94b; b. Meg. 3a; b. M. Qat. 28b.

significant role other than secondarily affirming what had already been stated.³⁹⁷

The same cannot be said for those instances in which named sages cite ‘as we translate’, most remarkably in case of the citations which have Rav Yoseph state a tradition ‘as we translate’. All three of these are important objections to the previously stated view, whether or not the objection is upheld. His citations are not atypical, because all the translations cited by named sages have a pivotal part to play and are accordingly indispensable within their immediate context. These citations provide either lexical definition, semantic clarification, or a phonetic parallel which can be linked to another Hebrew lexeme via its translation.

Conversely, those citations ‘as we translate’ that are narrated by the anonymous voice tend to underscore a point already made in the main body of the discourse. Their scope is more often than not relatively limited: they do not play an essential role in the hermeneutics of the units in which they occur, not even that of a cog in the machine; rather, they reaffirm a result achieved by other means (and sometimes they disturb that result unwittingly, as in the case of *b. Hul.* 80a, where the translation contradicts the actual argument it is supposed to confirm, or *b. Yom.* 77b, where it only covers half of the talmudic arguments while contradicting the other half). Some of these citations may have been supplemented by late anonymous editors—and their interest in establishing authority for the Targums will become clearer in the next chapter. The ‘we’ of ‘we translate’ may either refer to the rabbinic consensus of the quoted rabbi’s days or to that of the period in which the anonymous voice operates. For the Bavli as a literary document the distinction may not be deemed important, but for historical purposes it is.

The citations of Aquila are unique to the extent that they cite Aquila in a way no one else is cited, as a source of translation and in the past tense. What the analysis demonstrated is a fairly standard pattern of formula, consisting of the following sequence: Aquila translated + scriptural lemma + translation + Hebrew exposition. This structure sheds light on some quotations which are usually disregarded because Aquila’s translation is missing, although the exposition is attested—as the observation of these distinct elements of formula, lemma, translation and exposition opens

³⁹⁷*b. Pes.* 68a; *b. Yom.* 32b; 77b; *b. M. Qat.* 26a; *b. Ned.* 38a; *b. Qid.* 13a; *b. B. Qam.* 3b; *b. Men.* 110a.

up the possibility that the translation has been lost in those instances where only the exposition is present. In other instances, there is no exposition, perhaps less surprising because the translation often sufficed, especially where it occurs in a series of lexical identifications. Fascinating is the fact that the Hebrew exposition frequently includes another take on the Hebrew lemma than is evident in Aquila's own translations. The discrepancy between the translation and exposition with its second take on the scriptural lemmata implies that we cannot rely on these expositions for the reconstruction of the Greek translations that precede them, because they may well be based on different interpretations.

The unmarked translations add little to the picture that has not yet been established. By implication, unmarked translations of biblical lexemes may draw on an extant translational tradition. The lack of interest in their source as a narrative text in its own right could facilitate unacknowledged borrowings. Of no account as a literary work in its own right, translations could be used freely as a lexical repository, without reference to an identifiable translation if there was one to begin with, for on the flip side of the lexical interest, any of these 'citations' may reflect renderings made on the fly. The vast majority of all quotations, regardless of the introductory formula or the language, reflect the desire to define the meaning of a certain lexeme as accurately as possible within the confines (domain and scope) of the talmudic discourse. To interpret and identify realia is one of the essential tasks of the interpreter.³⁹⁸ At times such interpretations were sometimes simply couched in Hebrew, but in some instances Aramaic, or even Greek in Hebrew transliteration was used. Many of the unmarked Aramaic rewordings of Hebrew clauses, which have not been included in this chapter, also fall into this category.

As such, the Talmudim have little time for the aggadic import of the translations, unless it helped in their endeavours to establish the meaning of the Hebrew source text. In this regard there is no real difference between Aquila's version and the Targums. As lexical repositories there was little interest in the Targums as text, with few exceptions, as in the unmarked citation of TgJon Isa. 10. On the whole, however, the Targums remained at the same plane as ad-hoc translations into any language, whether Greek, Aramaic or Coptic. Such use of quotations, whether marked or not, reflects an understanding of languages as semantic participators in the mother of

³⁹⁸Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, pp. 48–51.

all languages, Hebrew, even though, as noted in Chapter One, the rabbinic sources do not explicitly label Hebrew the mother of all languages.

And finally, a selection principle especially in the Bavli became evident. In many cases, relevant but unhelpful translations in the Targums were ignored. The talmudic quotations were cited for their lexical value and out of a specific topical interest; the much more narrative approach of the targumists, who took the wider text into account in their translational strategies, would often turn out to be irrelevant to the halakhic (or aggadic) discourse. While that may not seem surprising, it does imply that dissonant targumic translations were not raised as objections and refutations, which is an important if negative conclusion.

In a few cases, extant translations may have been adapted, or made for the occasion, to suit the specific interests of the rabbis discussing a case; there is no reason, however, to assume *a priori* that the Bavli preserves an older version of the Targum in any of these instances. The differences between the extant translations and the citations in rabbinic literature, then, can usually be best explained as a function of the topical interest of the rabbinic passage at hand. Moreover, the fact that the incorporation of these citations tends to be late, and tailored to their talmudic topic, also renders any attempt to infer conclusions about the redaction of TgJon on their basis futile.

That the extant text of TgJon must sometimes have been known to Rav Yoseph and others does not affect the *status* and function of this translation within rabbinic discourse. Nor do the occasional confirmations of TgJon's version prove that the text was entirely fixed by the time of Rav Yoseph; it is conceivable that, at least in principle, its text was considered to be fluid; open to adaptation when new insights arose. It certainly remains remarkable that the way 'we translate' in TgOnq has been accorded more prominence than the memory of how Rav Yoseph translates.

The Yerushalmi displays a cool reception of the Aramaic translations, since it explicitly rejects specimens of Palestinian Targum without ever endorsing an extant Aramaic version—in contrast to its unreserved praise for Greek Scriptures. This important distinction must be qualified, as there is an important difference between the import of *language* over and against the import of established *Bible translations* in these texts. In spite of a lack of enthusiasm for the Targums, the Palestinian rabbis evidently used Aramaic, Latin and Greek in what has been labelled 'unmarked

translations' to explore the full meaning of the Tora. But these translations did not comprise a full running translation of the Scriptures, which could (and would) be placed on a par with the Hebrew original, and as such it is misleading to label them 'fragments of lost Targumim'. There is no doubt that other languages were used wherever deemed relevant to extrapolate the meaning of a Hebrew lexeme. Conversely, the recognition that other languages could be utilized in the interpretation of Scripture did not result in any ideology of the value of extant translations. On the contrary, extant translations were often regarded with suspicion, and even the anonymous editors felt compelled to defend their suitability and acceptance by creating composition myths. That, however, is the topic of the next chapter, 'The Faces of Aquila'.

The faces of Aquila

Is Aquila the Proselyte identical with Onqelos the Proselyte?¹ Certainly, Palestinian traditions once woven around the figure of Aquila the Proselyte are applied to Onqelos the Proselyte in the Babylonian context. The name Onqelos is nothing but an Aramaized version of Aquila,² as one would expect with the transition from the Greek-speaking environment of Palestine to the Aramaic-speaking environment of Babylonia. Yet the translatio of Aquila's person to the Babylonian cultural context involved much more than a linguistic shift and amounted to a transculturation which first developed in the Palestinian reception of the narratives surrounding his persona. The rich and living culture of these stories was passed on to Babylonia where a different process took over. Selecting a few traits from the received tradition, the Babylonian Onqelos was shaped to make important new points, some of which are unthinkable in the Palestinian context. Aquila's existence at one point may not be in doubt, yet his historical character is already elusive in the early Palestinian sources, whilst the multi-faceted Babylonian version of Onqelos can only be considered as myth.³ The astonishingly different reception which this famous proselyte met in Babylonia will concern us here.

The startling portraits of Aquila/Onqelos in rabbinic literature might as well suggest that they refer to more than one person bearing this name, with or without the appellative 'the proselyte', were it not for obvious connections between these portraits. Given the references to

¹There is an increasing consensus that the Palestinian traditions about Aquila have been adapted to refer to an Aramaic protagonist called Onqelos. So already S.D. Luzatto, 'Nachträgliches über die Thargumim', WZJT 5 (1844), pp. 124–37 (126); Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen*, pp. 164–65; Barthélemy, *Les Dévanciers*, pp. 148–54. See also p. 186 n. 64 above. For Aquila, see further N. Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 109–22.

²The name Aquila was pronounced as if Aramaic. The Tosefta speaks of Onqelos, but variant readings may indicate that the original reading was Aquila; see t. Hag. 3.3, MS Lon445. It is possible that 'Onqelos' reflects Babylonian influence on the Tosefta, since the Yerushalmi and the early Midrashim read 'Aquila'.

³With the Midrashim, the picture is more complicated—but of course they should not be considered as a single source.

Aquila's translational activity, provenance, patronymy, masters, and exegesis, notwithstanding variations between the stories on these points, we may safely assume that whatever shines through the different literary portraits is a single person, albeit one whose literary representation evolved over the course of time. Indeed, his contours became less and less realistic until a literary figure emerged with many different faces, who had startlingly little to do with any historical proselyte. That the rabbinic sources use the traditions about Aquila/Onqelos in selective and imaginative ways is something that is to be expected of any literary source. That they both deliberately and unwittingly confuse matters is hardly surprising.

The real historical value of these later traditions, and their development, is what they tell us about the values, interests and selective prisms of their tradents rather than about the life and work of one Aquila from Pontus.⁴ Ultimately, Aquila becomes the screen of rabbinic interests in conversion, interpretation and Jewish–Christian polemics. My primary interest here is in the Babylonian appropriation of the Aquila-traditions, and the Bavli's use of them for bolstering the practice of scriptural translation,⁵ but reading these Babylonian narratives requires their location within the whole of the Aquila *alias* Onqelos files. Analysing the sources one by one, and the Bavli in the light of its predecessors, will shed another light on the Babylonian reception of Aquila *alias* Onqelos.

9.1 The zealous convert

The Tosefta arguably provides the clearest portrait of Aquila/Onqelos.⁶ Its Onqelos is a most scrupulous convert, who attains to a high degree of purity and even outdoes Rabban Gamaliel the Second on one occasion. He appears six times, in five passages. Illustrative of his observance is t. Dem. 6.12–13:

גר וגוי שירשו את אביהן גוי רשאי לומר לו טול אתה צלמים ואני כלים אתה יין ואני פירות אונקלוס הגר חלק מאחיו החמיר על עצמו והוליד חלקו לים המלח

⁴Veltri rightly highlights the 'historical irrelevance' of the rabbinic stories; *Libraries, Translations*, p. 164. It is, however, still possible to connect these stories without assuming historical accuracy at their biographical level.

⁵A process detailed below in section 9.5.

⁶Aquila/Onqelos does not occur in the Mishna.

12. [If] a proselyte and a gentile inherit [the estate] of their gentile father, [the proselyte] is permitted to say to him, You take the idols, and I will take the vessels; you the wine, and I the fruit. 13. When Onqelos⁷ the Proselyte took a share [of his father's estate] from his brothers, he adopted a stricter position and took his part to the Dead Sea.

A proselyte may make an arrangement for the division of his father's estate before taking possession of his share, to avoid ownership of idolatrous objects; however, the corresponding *mishna* stipulates that he may no longer propose an alternative division once he has taken possession of his share (m. Dem. 6.10). This latter qualification is absent from the *Tosefta*, where Onqelos deals stricter with himself than is absolutely necessary from the *mishnaic* point of view. Onqelos refused to benefit indirectly from the idols of his father, by accepting an equivalent share from the estate that was not tainted by idolatry.

In similar vein, he is reported to eat his food in a higher state of purity than Rabban Gamaliel the Second, to avoid bathing in a bath-house in Ashqelon in contrast to Rabban Gamaliel the Second, and finally to be so meticulous with maintaining standards of purity concerning his cook's seat that the same Rabban Gamaliel was stretched to find something at fault.⁸ In all these instances, Onqelos is a typical proselyte, volunteering to be more than scrupulous with a clear emphasis on purity. The only exception, which still conforms to acceptable halakhic practice, is found in a passage describing that Onqelos burnt the equivalent of more than 70 Maneh for Rabban Gamaliel the Elder at his death.⁹ The question is whether this practice belongs to the ways of the Amorite, which one should not follow, or whether it has been prescribed by the Tora. The *Tosefta* settles this problem immediately, and adduces Onqelos as positive evidence that burning was acceptable practice.

The *Toseftan* Onqelos is the convert *par excellence* who is more royal than the king. While there is no mention of his Roman relatives as in later rabbinic sources other than his brothers of unknown identity, he is portrayed as a wealthy man who employed his own cook, could afford to spend a fortune on the funeral of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder who he

⁷Variant spelling אנקלוס in the *editio princeps*.

⁸t. Hag. 3.3; t. Miq. 6.3; t. Kel. B. Bat. 2.2.

⁹t. Shab. 7.18.

treated like a king, and was on close terms with Rabban Gamaliel the Second.

9.2 The illustrious interpreter

Onqelos does not feature in the Yerushalmi, but Aquila the Proselyte appears nine times. Five of these instances concern translations into Greek,¹⁰ and one a 'translation' into Hebrew.¹¹ These interpretations do not concern us here, although two things are worth pointing out. Aquila is first and foremost someone who is an 'interpreter', a translator. His quoted interpretations, however, reflect rabbinic exegesis more closely than they offer testimony to the Greek text of Aquila's translation as known to us from other sources. Whether or not these quotations reflect Aquila's scriptural activity,¹² they prove that his image as a translator was well established.

The remaining three instances concern appreciative traditions about the wit, ability and piety of the convert. The first instance, found in y. Dem. 6.10, 25d, provides the same story as the Toseftan parallel about the inheritance of an idolatrous ancestor discussed above.¹³ In the second and best known instance his involvement with scriptural translation is praised by R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua under quotation of Ps. 45:3, 'You are fairer'¹⁴ than all human beings' (y. Meg. I.11[8], 71c).

In this latter passage Aquila appears before two of the leading sages of their generation with a translation, the extent of which is not given, nor is the subject matter, although the context would suggest the Tora.

¹⁰y. Yom. 3.10(8), 71a: a translation into Greek to settle an interpretative difference, quoting what may well be Theodotion rather than Aquila (Veltri, *Eine Tora*, p. 190); y. Meg. 2.3, 73b (= y. M. Qat. 3.7, 83b with a scribal error); y. Shab. 6.4, 8b (which does not agree with the Hexaplaric version of Aquila); y. Suk. 3.5, 53d (which does not agree with the Hexaplaric version of Aquila).

¹¹y. Qid. I.1, 59a.

¹²Veltri has denied this in several publications, making a strong case for the non-translational character of the transmitted readings in rabbinic literature.

¹³The Yerushalmi adds a discussion of what he dumped in the Dead Sea: the monetary equivalent of idolatrous objects, the monetary equivalent of his share of the idolatrous objects, or the idolatrous objects themselves.

¹⁴For יפית as 'you are the fairest', cf. J.C. de Moor, 'Murices in Ugaritic Mythology', *Orientalia* 37 (1968), p. 212–15.

Whether he is a student or not this text does not make clear, unlike other texts. The praise they reserve for him is neither incidental nor individual at the editorial level, and it is relatively unique since there are only two other instances in the Yerushalmi of someone translating before other rabbis, one of which concerns a Babylonian situation.¹⁵ Their appraisal (וקילסו) is a pun on his name (עקילס), while the citation of Ps. 45:3 with יפית resonates with Yaphet, the eponym of Greek.¹⁶ The citation from a royal wedding psalm may reflect not only the excellence of his work but also his status as a proselyte, as this verse is frequently applied to Abraham,¹⁷ the patronym of all converts, confirming as it were that he is a true proselyte. The positive evaluation of his translation extends beyond these two rabbis, since his translation is cited several times in the Yerushalmi and Midrashim under his name. Patristic sources also credit his version with popularity among the Jews,¹⁸ while Justinian explicitly permits the use of Aquila's version in his decree that rabbinic leaders should not prevent a Greek translation from use in the synagogue liturgy.¹⁹ Rabbinic acclaim

¹⁵On the editorial context, see pp. 294–96 above; on the use of the verb תרגם, pp. 149–52. Labendz, 'Aquila's Bible Translation', rightly challenged the common view that Aquila necessarily produced his translation under any rabbinic guidance, but that the Yerushalmi does not indicate 'any wider rabbinic approbation' of his translation is an exaggeration given the context and the rabbis involved.

¹⁶And possibly with יפת אלהים ליתפ (Gen. 9:27), see y. Meg. 1.11[8], 71b (above, p. 26, and the analysis at pp. 295–97).

¹⁷Gen. R. 59:5; TanB. 72 22 (Tan. 18); TanB. 1. חיי שרה 1. G.G. Porton, *The Stranger within Your Gates: Converts and Conversion in Rabbinic Literature* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 7 argues that the practice of naming a convert after Abraham is not attested in early rabbinic literature. He distinguishes between naming someone 'N the son/daughter of Abraham' and converts who claim Abraham as their father (*The Stranger*, p. 224 n. 46). Porton seems to have overlooked that m. Bik. 1.4 states that the convert cannot say the plural לאבותינו 'our fathers', followed by b. Mak. 19a, which is consistent with the view that a native-born Israelite descends from all three Patriarchs, but a convert from Abraham only. Following y. Bik. 1.4, 64a Abraham was considered to be the father of all converts; the same notion is expressed in TanB. 72 6. All the other texts Porton advanced, namely t. Bik. 1.2, Sifre Deut. 299 and Mek. כספה 5 (edn Horovitz–Rabin, p. 335), do not refer to either Abraham or 'our fathers'. As for b. Shab. 137b, the reference to 'Abraham our Father' in the blessing at the circumcision is pronounced by the biological father of the circumcised; in the case of a convert, his father would not pronounce this blessing, which does not amount to a rabbinic denial of Abraham's patronymy in the case of converts.

¹⁸Origen, *Epistola ad Africanum*, 11.48–85; M. Harl and N. De Lange, *Origène: Philocalie*, 1–20, sur les écritures et la Lettre à Africanus sur l'histoire de Suzanne (Paris: Cerf, 1983), p. 526.

¹⁹Smelik, 'Justinian's Novella 146'.

and popular reception resulted in this translation's success in terms of longevity: as late as the thirteenth century CE his translation was in use among Byzantine Jewry.²⁰ The relevance of the tradition at this point is the approval he receives within the context of language selection and scriptural translation, all in the wake of m. Meg. 1.8's discussion of the languages in which Scripture may be written.

The final instance in the Yerushalmi reflects on Aquila's discussions with Hadrian, a motif that would become important in the Aquila/Onkelos files. In this early instance, found in y. Hag. 2.1, 77a, Aquila replies to a philosophical question of the Roman emperor and outwits him:²¹

ר' יודה בר פזי בשם ר' יוסי ביר' יודה אדריינוס שאל לעקילס הגר קושטין אתון אמרין דהין עלמא קיים על רוחא אמ' ליה אין אמ' ליה מן הן את מודע לי אמ' ליה אייתי לי הוגנין אייתי ליה הוגנין אטעונונון טעוניהון אקימון וארבעון נסתון וחנקון אמ' ליה הא לך אקימון אמ' ליה מן דחנקתון אמ' ליה כלום חסרתנן לא רוחא היא דנפקת מינהון

R. Yuda bar Pazzi in the name of R. Yose be-Rabbi Yehuda [said], Hadrian asked Aquila the Proselyte, It is true that you say this world exists by wind?

Aquila answered, Yes.

He said to him, How do you prove it to me?

Aquila answered, Bring me camels.

They brought him camels. He loaded them with loads, raised them and caused them to kneel, took them and suffocated them.

Then he said to Hadrian, Here are they: raise them!

He asked, After you have suffocated them?

He answered, Have I taken anything from them? Is it not merely the wind that has departed from them?²²

Suffocating camels is an unlikely feat to accomplish, as the story acknowledges in the details of the burden; it would have been unnecessary, too, but heightens the dramatic effect of the narrative. This remonstrance with the Roman emperor is verbal entertainment for inner-Jewish consumption: Hadrian addresses Aquila with the plural 'you', not the singular, as a representative of the Jewish people. That he is curious about Aquila's argument, conforms to the ideal of an emperor who is a philosopher too.²³

²⁰De Lange, 'Hebrew/Greek Manuscripts'; De Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts*.

²¹In the translation of Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, p. 27.

²²A parallel is found in Tan. בראשית 5.

²³See Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, p. 173.

The literary context for this dialogue is important. Among other things, m. Hag. 2.1 implores not to expound the Work of Creation before two persons, which the *gemara* in the *Yerushalmi* takes up by exactly such expositions based on scriptural verses. Among these features Amos 4.13, *כי הנה יוצר הרים וברא רוח* ‘Behold, He who formed the mountains, and created the wind’. The dialogue conforms to the requirement that the Work of Creation is discussed only between two persons; Aquila does not transgress this ruling, whilst his interpretation agrees with mainstream rabbinic thinking.

Rather than reflecting actual connections with the emperor,²⁴ this picture of Aquila is an image that is consistent with that of his wealthy status and learning as known from the *Tosefta* but also one that builds on his reputations and adds a legendary layer to his respectability. Aquila’s dialogues with Hadrian appear to have sprung from his origin as a wealthy gentile whose conversion must have been a trophy, all the more so since his name, ‘eagle’, designated the standard which Roman armies carried with them and by extension, designated a Roman legion. This literary construct, which corresponds to other imaginary dialogues between Roman emperors and Jews,²⁵ would be elaborated in *Midrash Tanḥuma*.

Extrapolating these dialogues from his elite Roman status is not without poignancy since Hadrian was the emperor who brutally suppressed the Bar Kokhba revolt. According to later rabbinic legends of the Bar Kokhba revolt, the revolt broke out when Hadrian issued a prohibition of circumcision. The historical accuracy of this account may be taken with a pinch of salt—although it certainly reflects Roman aversion of such ‘barbaric’ customs as circumcision. The genuine cause for the revolt may have to be sought elsewhere. Hadrian, who actively promoted Greek culture, embarked upon a building program throughout his empire, especially in the border provinces, where he either rebuilt or established Roman colonies with pagan temples. If anything, this activity is the most convincing cause for the Bar Kokhba revolt.²⁶

²⁴As suggested by rabbinic stories and Latin authors; see p. 458 below.

²⁵See M.D. Herr, ‘The Historical Significance of the Dialogues between Jewish Sages and Roman Dignitaries’, in J. Heinemann and D. Noy (eds.), *Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971), pp. 123–150; Herr does not see these stories as literary stereotypes but instead pleads for their historical significance.

²⁶See P. Schäfer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand: Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), pp. 29–50.

Whether or not the prohibition of circumcision as a trigger for rebellion is an accurate statement of events, circumcision plays a pivotal role in the narrative about Aquila and Hadrian of TanB. משפטים 3.²⁷ In this appreciation of his conversion, Aquila fears 'his uncle' Hadrian so that he seeks the latter's permission by stealth. In the narrative that follows, the tradition of the Yerushalmi about Aquila the Translator quoted above is absorbed and transformed:

והוא היה מתכוין להתגייר בא לו לארץ ישראל ולמד את התורה כיון שבא אצלו אחר ימים מצאוהו ר' אליעזר ור' יהושע וראו פניו משונות אמרו זה לזה עקילס למד את התורה כיון שבאו אצלו התחיל לשאול להם שאילות והם משיבין אותו
But [Aquila] intended to become a proselyte. He came to the land of Israel and studied the Tora. After some days, R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua found him, and saw that his countenance had changed. They said to each other, Aquila has studied the Tora. When they came to him, he began to ask them questions, and they answered him.²⁸

His change of countenance betrays the influence of Tora-wisdom, as R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua acknowledge in answering his questions and thereby accepting him as their pupil—the same rabbis under whose tutelage he translated (a selection of) the Tora into Greek in the Yerushalmi. But there are notable changes discernible in this version of Aquila's dialogue. This midrash conceives of his conversion almost as a miracle: only a few days suffice to make a dramatic impact on his outlook. More to the point, the conclusion makes Tora-learning entirely dependent on circumcision. As the story shifts back to the imperial court, Hadrian also observes his change of countenance but he does so without understanding what this means. When he is told and has been demonstrated the truth, he reluctantly accepts Aquila's study of the Tora but maintains his opposition to circumcision:

א"ל אנדריינוס לעקילס למה עשית כך א"ל שבקשתי ללמוד תורה א"ל היה לך ללמוד ולא לימול א"ל אם אין אדם מל אינו יכול ללמד שנאמר מגיד דבריו ליעקב למי שהוא מל מיעקב חוקיו זו תורה ומשפטי אלו הדינין

Hadrian said to Aquila, Why did you do that?

He replied to him, Because I sought to learn Tora.

Hadrian said to him, You should have studied Tora but not have become

²⁷ See Silverstone, *Aquila and Onkelos*, pp. 25–27; Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, pp. 170–71.

²⁸ A truncated version of the same story is found in Exod. R. 30.12. The material in Tanḥuma is attributed to either Onkelos or Aquila, varying by instance or textual witness.

circumcised.

Aquila answered, If a man is uncircumcised, he cannot teach, as it is said: 'He revealed his words to Jacob' (Ps. 147.19), to him who is circumcised like Jacob. 'His statutes' (ibid.) are the Tora, 'his judgments' (ibid.) are the decrees.

The main point of this narrative is that you can only study Tora when you are part of Israel in the flesh. Hadrian may acknowledge that Aquila's countenance changed and grant him the study of the Tora, Aquila himself emphasizes the ultimate necessity of circumcision without which learning itself is impossible. Jacob represents the physical rather than spiritual son of Abraham, emphasizing the unity between covenant, commandments, and Tora.²⁹ Christianity claimed Abraham as a spiritual father, Aquila models himself on his grandson, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. The battle front between Judaism and Christianity has been disguised in the form of a dialogue between a proselyte and an emperor whose pagan orientation may have long been forgotten by the time this parable was composed. Hadrian and Aquila are suitably portrayed as family members,³⁰ who can agree on the importance of Bible studies. The midrash vindicates Aquila's conversion as a triumph of Judaism close to the very bosom of the Church, a motif which the Bavli, as we will see, will develop even further. Midrash Tanḥuma develops motifs found in the Yerushalmi, but makes an entirely different point; in turn, both differ considerably from the Tosefta's interest in Aquila. There is nothing on the purity which the Toseftan Onqelos guarded so zealously—a concern perhaps more acute during the Tannaitic period.

9.3 The anxieties of a proselyte

None of the early halakhic Midrashim has any tradition about either Aquila or Onqelos, with one brief exception in Sifra בַּהֲרַ 1 to Lev. 25.7 which relates that in a sabbatical year Aquila's servants 'may eat what is in your land, but not what Aquila brought to his servants in Pontus'. Although Aquila is not identified as 'the Proselyte' here, Pontus is his home town according

²⁹Note also that Ps. 147.20 states גוי ומשפטים בל ידעום 'He did not do so for any other nation; of such rules they know nothing'.

³⁰For Aquila's genealogy, see below, p. 458.

to patristic literature.³¹ The majority of instances in the later Midrashim concern a quotation, usually concerning only a few words, of a scriptural translation that is attributed to Aquila, sometimes Onqelos; in this respect they agree with the Yerushalmi. But apart from his interpretative activity³² and dialogues with Hadrian, a new motif is found in several Midrashim. In Gen. R. 70.5 he is anxious about the status of the proselyte:

ונתן לי לחם לאכול ובגד ללבוש עקילס הגר נכנס אצל ר' אליעזר אמר לו הרי כל שבחו שלגר שנ' ואוהב גר לתת לו לחם ושמלה אמר לו וכי קלה היא בעיניך דבר שנתחבט בו זקן ונתן לי לחם לאכל וגו' ובא והושיטה לו בקנה נכנס אצל ר' יהושע התחיל מנחמו בדברים לחם זו התורה שנ' לכו לחמו בלחמי שמלה זו טלית זכה אדם לתורה זכה למצוה ולא עוד אלא שמשאיין מבנותיהן לכהונה והיו בני בניהם מקריבים עולות על גבי המזבח לחם זו לחם הפנים שמלה אילו בגדי כהונה הרי במקדש בגבולין מנין לחם זו חלה שמלה זו ראשית הגז³³

'And will give me bread to eat, and clothing to put on' (Gen. 28.20).

Aquila the Proselyte visited R. Eliezer and said to him, Does then all the benefit of the proselyte lie in what is said, 'And loves the proselyte'³⁴ in giving him food and clothing' (Deut. 10.18)?

He replied, Is then that a small thing in your eyes for which [our] ancestor³⁵ begged, [saying,] 'And will give me bread to eat, and clothing to put on' etc. (Gen. 28.20), while He comes and spoon-feeds him [the proselyte]!

He visited R. Yehoshua, who began to comfort him with words, 'Bread' refers to the Tora, as it says, 'Come, eat of my bread' (Prov. 9.5); 'clothing' refers to the tallit: when a man is privileged to [study the] Tora, he is privileged to [perform] a religious command.

Moreover, they [the proselytes] marry their daughters into the priesthood, so that their descendants may offer burnt-offerings on the altar.

(Another interpretation:)³⁶ 'Bread' refers to the shew-bread, while 'clothing'

³¹However, not only is Aquila not identified as 'The Proselyte', Sifra actually reads פונטוס, and the correction into פונטוס 'Pontus', which would assume a not uncommon graphical confusion of ט and ש, and which may be justified by Yalq. S. §659's reading פנתוס, is above all inspired by Christian references to his provenance. So Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, pp. 168–69. For Christian texts, see esp. Irenaeus, as cited in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.8.10.

³²Cf. Gen. R. 1.12.

³³Note the many variant readings as listed in edn Theodor-Albeck, II, p. 802.

³⁴Lit. 'stranger, sojourner', but the word גר came to denote a proselyte in rabbinic literature and is clearly understood in that sense here.

³⁵Namely, Jacob; see n. 49 below.

³⁶The reading א"ד is only attested in the Yemenite MS that once belonged to Adler, and in the Bomberg edition; see edn Theodor-Albeck, II, p. 803.

refers to the priestly vestments.

So much for the Temple. How do we know that this verse is fulfilled in the borders too?

There 'bread' refers to ḥalla, while 'clothing' refers to the first shearings.

Why would Deut. 10.18 be deemed unsatisfactory? Aquila, as noted above, stood for a wealthy Roman who would not be lured by either food or clothing;³⁷ R. Yehoshua's reply acknowledges as much. But in a deeper sense, the focus on this verse and its potential for disillusion arise from the ambiguity of the word גר in post-biblical Hebrew. This midrash clearly understands this word as a proselyte,³⁸ which changes the sociological meaning of the word from 'stranger' to 'convert'. Yet Rabbinic Hebrew retained the older meaning as well, which is reflected in the Targums: they render גר with גיורא, which can mean both 'resident stranger' and 'proselyte'.³⁹ The ambiguity is illustrated by TgNeof's translation of גר in Gen. 15.13 as גיורין וותבתין, which must be understood as a hendiadys, qualifying the *ger/giyora* as a 'resident alien' rather than a 'proselyte',⁴⁰ because the expression applies to Abram's offspring for which the meaning 'proselyte' would not be appropriate.⁴¹

This double meaning plays a role in our passage as well. Deut. 10.18-19 motivates the command to love the stranger because 'you were strangers in the land of Egypt'; TgOnq and TgPsJ render MT's גרים with דיירין.⁴²

³⁷This point is made explicit in Qoh. R. 7.16: כמה טווסין וכמה פסיונין אית לי ואפילו עבדי לא משגיחין עליהון 'So numerous are the peacocks and pheasants I possess that even my slaves do not take notice of them!'.

³⁸This follows an old interpretative tradition. The LXX reads προσήλυτος, which reflects the Hebrew and may carry the same ambiguity as Rabbinic Hebrew גר.

³⁹Cf. Sokoloff, DJPA, p. 127 and Sokoloff, DJBA, pp. 278-79. Cf. Díez Macho, *El Targum*, pp. 79-80; Levine, *The Aramaic Version*, pp. 184-85. Modern translations of the Targums are divided about the meaning: I. Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1982), p. 135 n. 14 states that גיורא means 'proselyte', while the various translations in the series *The Aramaic Bible* assume the meaning 'stranger' passim.

⁴⁰Pace M. Ohana, 'Prosélytisme et Targum palestinien: Données nouvelles pour la datation de Néofiti 1', *Bib* 55 (1974), pp. 317-32. While the translation follows an associative translation strategy, reading גר in the light of Gen. 23.4, Lev. 25.23, 35, 47 where גר וותשב occurs, this translation does not explain why this strategy was employed here, but not elsewhere.

⁴¹Abraham himself is designated as a convert in b. Suk. 49b and Num. R. 8.9.

⁴²TgNeof retains the usual equivalent גיורין. Cf. TgJon Jer. 14.8, the only exception in TgJon where גר is translated with תבתא 'resident'; Smolar and Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan*, p. 98.

Accordingly, he is anxious about remaining an outsider who is both within and without, still not fully admitted into the fold: the proselyte's reward is what common hospitality extends to a stranger.⁴³ Such a concern could have troubled a convert both before and after the completion of the conversion process, although the question of what reward lies in store for the aspiring convert is typically raised before.⁴⁴ Indeed, the late parallel in Num. R. 8.9 deals with the motives for conversion.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, in Qoh. R. 7.16 the contrast between forbearance and impatience⁴⁶ is illustrated by the story of a Persian would-be convert and that of Aquila, recommending a patient attitude towards each of them, חזר לסיאורו 'lest he should return to his paganism'.⁴⁷

In Gen. R. too, his teachers⁴⁸ address him in the bad cop/good cop approach. Taking the hard line, R. Eliezer tells Aquila off: God hands him food and clothing on a plate, whereas 'that elder' (אותו זקן) in some witnesses; Jacob)⁴⁹ had to beg God for it. Using the expression 'elder' or even 'that elder' rather than the far more common אבינו (as in the parallel of TanB. 6) 6), R. Eliezer apparently circumvents the term 'father' which would not apply to Aquila as a convert.⁵⁰ Thus R. Eliezer confirms the proselyte's distinct status within Israel and does

⁴³Cf. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), II, p. 443.

⁴⁴On the motives for conversion, see Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, pp. 151–52.

⁴⁵... לומר שגר שמתגייר לשם שמים זוכה שיוצאים מבניו בנים שהיו הקדשים שלהם. 'This is to tell you that a proselyte whose conversion is due to pure motives is privileged to have as his children's issue sons to whom the hallowed things will belong'. This privilege is a reference to offspring marrying into the priesthood and, at least in theory, eligible to bring sacrifices.

⁴⁶Based on Qoh. 7.8, טוב ארך רוח מגבה רוח, 'Better a patient spirit than a haughty spirit'.

⁴⁷טובה היא האריכה שהאריך רבי יהושע עם עקילס הגר מהקפדה שהקפיד בו רבי אליעזר 'better is the forbearance which R. Yehoshua displayed with Aquila the proselyte than the impatience which R. Eliezer showed towards him, for otherwise he might have returned to his heathenism'.

⁴⁸Note the readings ליעזר (MS Vat30) and ר"ש (MS Ox3) for אליעזר.

⁴⁹That the expression אותו זקן should be understood as a reference to Jacob follows from the singular form and the scriptural quotation. The translation of the Soncino Midrash with 'our ancestors' misses the point. The word frequently denotes eminent people or scholars, as in the case of the three Patriarchs in b. Yom. 28b. Variants in Gen. R. 70.5: זקן, אותו הזקן or הזקן, זקן; see ed. Theodor–Albeck, II, p. 802.

⁵⁰Converts could only claim to have Abraham as their father, but not all of the three Patriarchs; see m. Bik. 1.3 and p. 438 n. 17 above. The same expression for Abraham occurs

nothing to relieve his anxiety. By way of contrast, R. Yehoshua takes a 'comforting' approach as he highlights the symbolical value of 'bread' as Tora, which is made accessible to the convert, as well as clothing here understood as the status of someone who is eligible to perform the commandments.⁵¹ Eliciting the central tenets of rabbinic Judaism from Deut. 10.18, R. Yehoshua addresses Aquila with a prospect that an aspiring convert would probably have found palatable.

The narrative does not end here, but mentions two further benefits: a proselyte may marry his daughters into the priesthood, and their offspring will be eligible to bring sacrifices. How are these two further elements connected with Deut. 10.18, or indeed, R. Yehoshua's reply? We could read them in conjunction with the next lines which have 'bread' stand for the shewbread, symbolizing the Temple, and 'clothing' for the priestly vestments. But in two witnesses these lines are marked as 'another interpretation', thus disconnected from R. Yehoshua's words. Admittedly, the interpretations are conjoined in Qoh. R. 7.16,⁵² where R. Yehoshua starts with the shewbread interpretation—only to be rejected out of hand by his own students.⁵³ The first of these two benefits, that the daughter of a male proselyte could marry into a priestly family, was highly controversial, with the second depending on the first. The Mishna outlines three positions: R. Yehuda excludes daughters of male converts from marrying into the priesthood, R. Eliezer b. Yaaqov agrees with him unless the daughter's mother was an Israelite, while R. Yose imposes no restrictions whatsoever

in Gen. R. 63.11 and 76.2, but in a different context: Jacob addresses Esau about their deceased father, avoiding his name by way of euphemism.

⁵¹The טלית, worn during prayer, refers to the performance of commandments in the present context; I see no reason to narrowly identify this cloak as 'the [scholar's] cloak', which does not fit R. Yehoshua's interpretation; contrast the Soncino translation.

⁵²Num. R. 8.9 mirrors Gen. R. 70.5's ambiguity.

⁵³צמצמו בדברים אמרו לו תלמידיו וכי קלה היא בעיניך דבר שנחבט בו הזקן שנאמר ונתן לי לחם 'His disciples criticized his statement and said to him, Is, then, the thing insignificant in your eyes for which the patriarch begged, as it is said, "And will give me bread to eat"? So why do you put him off with a trifle? [R. Yehoshua] therefore began to speak more persuasively to him...' I am not convinced, however, that קנה את מושיטו means 'put him off with a trifle' as the Soncino translation has it; the same expression occurs in Gen. R. 70.5 in the sense of spoon-feeding, or 'to hand someone something on a plate'. That לזה דחיתה בקנה in y. Shab. 3.4, 6a does have the meaning of 'sending someone off none the wiser' is related to the different verb used there. In the present context, this interpretation would be far from trivial; see below.

on such a marriage. The Tosefta, expanding R. Yehuda's view but omitting R. Yose's opinion, would seem to reflect a more restrictive stance.⁵⁴ Further qualifications are added in the Talmudim, with the Yerushalmi concluding that only a female born after the conversion was completed is eligible for marriage into the priesthood.⁵⁵ On this evidence, the prospect held out to Aquila is too rash, as R. Yehoshua's students put to him in Qoh. R. 7.16.⁵⁶ In the late parallel of Exod. R. 19.4, however, the promise of proselytes serving in the Temple is upheld without reservation. While we may harbour doubts whether these two supplemental promises in Gen. R. 70.5 reflect the original narrative of R. Yehoshua's reply to Aquila, their inclusion shows how important this issue was and it confirms that the unconditional promise of marrying daughters to male priests would have placated a would-be convert, perhaps particularly one who is perceived to move in high circles.

Aquila's anxiety about the status of proselytes also occurs in TanB. *ḥ' 6*, where the dialogue with an 'old man' rather than his teachers is embedded in the claim that proselytes are more beloved by God than Israelites, because they came to accept the 'reign of Heaven' without witnessing the terrifying events at Mount Sinai. While Aquila asks the same question, and receives the reference to Jacob in return, the emphasis is on God's love for proselytes:

רבתינו אמרו חביב הוא הגר שהכתיב הקב"ה על עצמו למה תהיה כגר בארץ אמר הקב"ה כך אני מחבב את הגר ואברהם אב הגרים
Our teachers said, Beloved is the proselyte, because the Holy One blessed be He has written about himself, 'Why are you like a stranger in the land?' (Jer. 14.8). The Holy One, blessed be He, said, So I love the proselytes, and Abraham is the father of [all] proselytes.

There is no question that this version of the same narrative counters the inferior or ambiguous status of converts which, as Porton demonstrated, is rife in rabbinic literature;⁵⁷ God himself assumes the status of a proselyte.

⁵⁴m. Bik. 1.5; m. Qid. 4.6-7; t. Qid. 4.15; 5.2-3. See Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, pp. 155-65. For the Tosefta, cf. Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, VIII, p. 970, l. 19.

⁵⁵These include the requirement that female converts are only eligible for marriage into the priesthood if they converted before the age of three years and one day, as based on Sifre Num.'s interpretation of Num. 31.18; y. Bik. 1.5, 64a. See Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, pp. 68, 159-60, 162.

⁵⁶See n. 53 above.

⁵⁷See Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, *passim*.

Thus this story confirms the precarious status of proselytes between gentiles and native-born Israelites in early rabbinic culture,⁵⁸ using the example of Aquila to express various views on the topic—while it draws a picture of Aquila in which his ultimate conversion still hangs in the balance.

A similar interest of a would-be proselyte is reflected in Pes. R. 23.9:⁵⁹

עקיילס הגר שאל את ר' אליעזר אמר לו הואיל וחביבה היא מילה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא מפני מה לא ניתנה בעשרת הדברות אמר לו קודם עשרת הדברות ניתנה דכתב ושמרתם את בריתי זו ברית שבת וברית מילה

Aquila the proselyte asked R. Eliezer, and said to him, Since circumcision is beloved before the Holy One, blessed be He, why is it not given in the Ten Commandments? He replied to him, It was given before the Ten Commandments, for it is written, 'If you will keep my covenant' (Exod. 19.5), that is, the covenant of the Shabbath and the covenant of circumcision.

That a proselyte would express interest in the status of the commandment to circumcise stands to reason. In Late Antiquity, this requirement was not *sine cure* for an adult and it must have scared many males who were attracted to Judaism. A large number of them would become known as 'God-fearers': those who accepted a fair number of Jewish practices without fully converting.⁶⁰ But the motif of the importance of circumcision within the configuration of precepts has another edge, as the literary context demonstrates. Aquila's question is wedged in between two other enquiries, in which the same question is put to Rabbi and R. Yose by a philosopher and a *matrona*, a Roman lady; thus all three inquirers represent wealthy or educated Romans. Since this composition must be dated after the emergence of the Byzantine Empire, and the questions reflect an awareness of the Ten Commandments, these questions were probably asked by

⁵⁸ See Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, *passim*; M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁵⁹ Ch. 23 §10 in R. Ulmer, *Pesiqta Rabbati: A Synoptic Edition of Pesiqta Rabbati Based upon All Extant Manuscripts and the Editio Princeps* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), I, p. 560. For convenience, the Hebrew text is cited after M. Friedmann, *Pesikta Rabbathi* (Vienna 1880), pp. 116b–117a.

⁶⁰ In rabbinic literature this requirement is always assumed, but it is likely that at the beginning of the Common Era the demand of circumcision varied, particularly outside the influence of the (pre-)rabbinic movement; see Vermes et al. (eds.), *Schürer: The History*, III, pp. 164–65, 173.

Christians. They reflect one of the issues of the Jewish–Christian debate, just like TanB. משפטים 3 discussed above.

9.4 The son of a colonist

The rabbinic sources discussed so far already demonstrate the increasingly agile nature of the Onqelos portraits in which a legendary convert, known for his status and wealth in the Roman world, becomes a scrupulous convert and an illustrious student, a dialogue partner and cousin of Hadrian and turns from an exemplary proselyte into an exponent of proselyte anxiety. In certain motifs the Bavli's portrayal of Onqelos is reminiscent of these previous sources, but the overall picture that emerges from the five places where Onqelos occurs is markedly different from its Palestinian precursors—the logical continuation of a process that is already discernible in these sources, including the Tosefta. The Bavli selects, adapts and recontextualizes older traditions to make them serve its own goals.

The aim of the following analysis is to show to what extent the Bavli appropriates previous traditions by reframing the stories in new contexts. First I will focus on the double-portrait of Onqelos in b. A. Zar. 11a and b. Git. 56b–57a, then on the single claim in b. Meg. 3a that Onqelos 'said' the translation which came to bear his name as Targum Onqelos. The two remaining instances in which Onqelos features concern his burning of items at the funeral of Gamaliel the Elder, discussed above, where his behaviour is evaluated in halakhic terms (b. A. Zar. 11a),⁶¹ and one instance of interpretative activity (b. B. Bat. 99a).⁶²

⁶¹G. Veltri, *Magie und Halakha* (TSAJ, 62; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1997), pp. 159–60.

⁶²In the latter passage, for which no parallel exists, Onqelos the Proselyte resolves a contradiction between 2 Chron. 3.13, which has the Cherubim's faces turned inward, and Exod. 25.20 which has them face one another, without recourse to either Greek or Aramaic. His comparison of the position of the cherubim with students leaving their master may reflect the interest of the Babylonian sages who insisted upon proper, and modest, attitudes of pupils towards their master; see Kalmin, *The Sage*, pp. 1–5 (note the vastly different reading of b. B. Mes. 84a in D. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993], pp. 212–25). His exegesis is introduced by תניא in the MSS; Vilna has דתניא. Vat115 reads אונקלוס הגר דתניא for דתניא אונקלוס הגר אמר.

The two portraits of Onqelos in b. A. Zar. 11a and b. Git. 56b–57a may be dubbed a double-portrait because they both uniquely identify Onqelos as the son of one Colonicus (more on him below) within a larger literary framework that bears on the various modes of Roman-Jewish relationships. In b. A. Zar. 11a the emperor's angry reaction to Onqelos' conversion to Judaism is reminiscent of the dialogues between Hadrian and Onqelos, although the emperor remains anonymous and their family relationship unmentioned:

אונקלוס בר קלוניקוס⁶³ איגייר שדר קיסר גונדא דרומאי אבתריה משכינהו בקראי איגיור⁶⁴ הדר שדר גונדא דרומאי [אחרינא]⁶⁵ אבתריה אמר להו לא תימרו ליה ולא מידי כי הו שקלו⁶⁶ ואזלו אמר להו אימא לכו⁶⁷ מילתא בעלמא ניפירא⁶⁸ נקט נורא קמי פיפירא⁶⁹ פיפירא לדוכסא⁷⁰ דוכסא להגמונא הגמונא לקומא קומא מי נקט נורא מקמי אינשי אמרי ליה לא אמר להו⁷¹ הקב"ה נקט נורא קמי ישראל דכתיב⁷² וה' הולך לפניו יומם וגו' איגיור [כולהו]⁷³ הדר שדר גונדא אחרינא אבתריה⁷⁴ אמר להו לא תשתעו מידי⁷⁵ בהדיה כי נקטי ליה⁷⁶ ואזלי חזא מזוזתא [דמנחא אפתחא]⁷⁷

⁶³The reading קלונימוס in Vilna and Pes1511 editions is neither supported by MSS Mun95 (preceded by בר instead of בר), H1337 and Rab15, nor by the commentary of R. Ḥananel, nor is it attested in the following witnesses of the parallel in b. Git. 56b: Mun95, Vat130, Vat140, Son1488 and Vilna.

⁶⁴For איגיור, H1337 reads ואיגיור, Rab15 and Mun95 גיירנהו.

⁶⁵Bracketed in Vilna; H1337 reads גונדא אחרינא, Rab15 גונדא אחרינא and Mun95 גונדא דרומאי [אחרינא] for אחרינא.

⁶⁶For שקלי ליה and Rab15 כי נקטי ליה, Mun95 דכנקטי ליה, H1337 כי הו שקלו, (with the last word supplemented in the margin).

⁶⁷For אימ' לכו בחד, Mun95 אמניא לכו, H1337 (so also Rab15), אימא לכו.

⁶⁸For נפרא (error), Rab15 נפרא, H1337 (so also Mun95), ניפירא.

⁶⁹For לאפי, Mun95 לאפיפירא, Rab15 קמי אפיפירא, H1337 קמי פיפירא.

⁷⁰For אפיפירא נקט נורא קמי, H1337 פיפירא' לי דוכס', Mun95 אפיפירא לדוכסא, Rab15 דוכסא.

⁷¹For אמרו ליה לא, Rab15 אמרי ליה לא אמר להו, (Mun95 and H1337 also read אמרו) has been crossed out.

⁷²For אמ' להו והקב"ה כתי' H1337 אמר להו הקב"ה נקט נורא קמי ישראל דכתיב, Rab15 א"ל ואילו הקב"ה כתי' Mun95 ואילו הקב"ה הוה נקט נורא קמי ישראל דכתיב.

⁷³Attested in H1337, absent in Mun95 and Rab15.

⁷⁴This word is absent in Rab15.

⁷⁵For כלל כלל, Mun95 כלל, H1337 and Rab15 מידי.

⁷⁶For נקטי ליה, Rab15 דנקיטיניה, which has the typically Palestinian nun-infix before the suffix. If not an error or stray reading, this may be a remnant of the story's original dialect.

⁷⁷The bracketed words are attested by H1337, but not in Mun95 or Rab15.

אותיב ידיה עלה ואמר להו מאי האי אמרו ליה אימא לך⁷⁸ את⁷⁹ אמר להו מנהגו
של עולם מלך בשר ודם⁸⁰ יושב מבפנים ועבדיו משמרים אותו מבחוץ ואילו הקב"ה⁸¹
עבדיו מבפנים והוא משמרן מבחוץ⁸² שנאמר ה' ישמר צאתך ובואך מעתה ועד עולם⁸³
איגיור תו לא שדר בתריה⁸⁴

Ongelos son of Colonicus converted to Judaism.

The Emperor sent a cohort of Romans after him.

He lured them by [citing] scriptural verses.

He converted them to Judaism.

Then he sent another cohort after him.

He said to them, Do not say anything to him.

Whilst they grasped him and went along, he said to them, Let me tell you something secular:⁸⁵

[In a procession] the torchlighter carries the light in front of the torchbearer, the torchbearer in front of the dux, the dux in front of the hegemon, the hegemon in front of the comes; but does the comes carry the light in front of the people [that follow]?'

'No!' they replied.

Said he, Yet the Holy One, blessed be He, does carry the light before Israel, for Scripture says, 'The LORD went before them by day [in a pillar of cloud, to guide them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, that they might travel day and night]' (Exod. 13.21).

They converted to Judaism.

Again he sent another cohort.

He said to them, Do not make any conversation whatsoever with that one.

Whilst they grasped him and went along, he saw the mezuzah which was fixed on the door-frame.

He placed his hand on it and said to them, 'What is this?'

They said to him, You tell us then.

Said he, According to wordly custom, a king of flesh and blood dwells within

⁷⁸This word is absent in H1337.

⁷⁹H1337 has a plus after this word: איי.

⁸⁰The expression בשר ודם is absent in H1337.

⁸¹For ה' ואילו הקב"ה, H1337, Mun95 and Rab15 read ה' והקב"ה.

⁸²משמר את ישראל מבחוץ והן מבפני, H1337 reads עבדיו מבפנים והוא משמרן מבחוץ, Mun95 משמר את ישראל מבחוץ, and Rab15 משמר את ישראל מבחוץ (with the last word crossed out, but supplemented between the lines above משמר in cursive script).

⁸³For יי שמרך יי צלך על יד (Ps. 121.8), H1337 reads יי שמרך יי צלך על יד (Ps. 121.5).

⁸⁴The clause תו לא שדר בתריה is absent in H1337.

⁸⁵For בעלמא as 'secular' (lit. 'general'), see below.

while his servants guard him without; but the Holy One, blessed be He, guards Israel from without; as it is said, 'The LORD will guard your going and coming now and forever' (Ps. 121.8).

They converted to Judaism.

He sent for him no more.

This narrative is embedded in a long section (ff. 8a–11b) concerning the celebration of pagan festivals and Roman-Jewish relationships. In order not to benefit from or contribute to pagan practices, Jews should avoid any financial dealings with idolaters from three days before the beginning of a pagan festival until its end (m. A. Zar. 1.3). The Mishna specifies several Roman festivals, *Calenda*, *Saturnalia* and *Cratesis*, followed by three imperial festivals: the anniversaries of the emperor's accession to the throne, his birthday, and his death. Our story belongs to the commentary on the meaning of the Mishna's יום גניסיה 'accession day', which lexically could be construed as 'birthday'. In the ensuing debate, the question whether an emperor is ever succeeded by his son, leads to Antoninus and his son Asverus, who succeeded his father on the latter's request. The Bavli then continues with many legendary encounters between Antoninus and Rabbi, the conversion of Qetia bar Shalom, and the non-arrest of Onqelos. After Qetia's and Onqelos' stories, the editor inserts a comment on Antoninus and Rabbi to the effect that this narrative about two righteous gentiles is embedded in the encounters between Rabbi and Antoninus.

Since the narrative which concerns us here has a number of Greek and Latin loanwords in the dialogue between Onqelos and the second cohort which refer to specifically Graeco-Roman practices,⁸⁶ it would seem to have been modelled after a Palestinian tradition. The element of the procession suits the halakhic context of Graeco-Roman festivities well. This assumption is a priori likely because stories dealing with a Roman Aquila are more naturally at home in Palestine.⁸⁷ Indeed, in b. Men. 33b

⁸⁶Namely, *dux*, *comes* and ἡγεμών. See Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, pp. 188, 219, 509. Unidentified are the Greek loanwords נִפְיִירָא and אֶפִּיפִּירָא (and its variant readings). Levy, *WTM*, IV, p. 42, suggests φανηφόρος 'torchbearer'. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, II, p. 1168 (sub פִּיפִּירָא) suggests 'royal litter'. Cf. M. Sachs, *Beiträge zur Sprach- und Alterthumsforschung* (Berlin: Veit und Comp., 1852–1854), II, pp. 111–13 who does not attempt to identify נִפְיִירָא and פִּיפִּירָא. The Latin loanwords probably came via Greek; cf. A. Cameron, 'Latin Words in the Greek Inscriptions of Asia Minor', *The American Journal of Philology* 52 (1931), pp. 232–262.

⁸⁷This story has no close parallel in rabbinic literature to support the assumption of a Palestinian provenance of its core. Some weak support for this may be found in one

the Palestinian Amora R. Hanina contrasts the values of the world (מדת בשר ודם) with those of God in almost identical terms as Onqelos does here, with God's servants dwelling within and God guarding them without, quoting Ps. 121.5 rather than 121.8—as does one MS in b. A. Zar. 11a.⁸⁸ That the present wording is Babylonian, apart from these loanwords, both in terms of dialect and phrasing⁸⁹ shows that this is a Babylonian adaptation of a Palestinian tradition.

The story follows a well-established pattern of a king who sends three subsequent despatches to a non-obliging protagonist.⁹⁰ This folkloristic repetition creates a tension that emphasizes the inevitable defeat of the king. Onqelos 'pulled' the first cohort by a number of unspecified scriptural verses, משכינורו בקראי, an expression that does not occur anywhere else,⁹¹ as a result of which they all convert at once. The second cohort has been warned not to speak to him, but Onqelos asks for permission to tell them מילתא בעלמא 'something worldly',⁹² here to be understood in contrast to the קראי 'scriptural verses' which had lured the first cohort. Unable to use his previous strategy, Onqelos resorts to other tactics to capture the soldiers' attention and hold them spellbound. He asks the second cohort a rhetorical question as a prelude to citing a verse, and in view of the third cohort he touches a mysterious object, the mezuzah, which was traditionally associated with magic, and explains its protective function. The attraction to the soldiers is made more explicit in these latter confrontations. In the first of these, God's protection during Israel's march in the desert (Exod. 13.21) stands in stark contrast to the lack of concern for those lagging behind in the order of a Roman procession. In the third

manuscript with a typically Palestinian Aramaic reading; see n. 76 above. However, one isolated reading is obviously insufficient.

⁸⁸ See n. 83 above.

⁸⁹ The expression מילתא בעלמא is probably Babylonian; see A.M. Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance from Power: Redaction and Meaning in b. A.Z. 10a–11a', in J. Rubenstein (ed.), *Creation and Composition; the Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammim) to the Aggadah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 23–69 (63). I learned a lot from this study, but strongly disagree in detail and tenor.

⁹⁰ See, for example, 2 Kgs 1 (Aḥazya vs. Eliya) and, in an adapted form, b. San. 38b (God vs. angels). For the repetition, see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 90.

⁹¹ Apart from the parallel in Yalq. S. Cant. §933 which depends on this passage.

⁹² For this meaning, cf. מילי דעלמא in b. Ber. 60a. The present story contrasts the נהגו עולם with God's protection of Israel.

example the *mezuzah* is understood as God's protection of Israel against evil, but the crux is once again the contrast between mortal kings and God: whereas God protects his people from the outside, mortal kings stay inside and require protection themselves. This latter point subtly reverses the previously related behaviour of emperor Antoninus during his secretive visits to Rabbi, who had his servants killed while waiting upon him on the outside when he was inside Rabbi's house.⁹³ Finally, the emperor gives up: a case of Judaism vindicated.

That the soldiers box the compass without any further arguments is a conspicuous feature of this story. At face value Onqelos uses scriptural verses to convince his captors of God's superiority, appealing to their sense of not being treated as equals, in contrast to the verses describing how God protects his people both on the march or inside their homes. But the immediate impact on the Roman soldiers and the touching of the *mezuzah* suggest another subtext. Engaging in dialogue with Onqelos is tantamount to conversion, with a subtle hint of magic: powerful verses are recited, an amulet being touched.⁹⁴ These three cohorts are converted as instantaneously as three people are raised from the dead in the related narrative of Onqelos bar Colonicus in *b. Git.* 56b–57a. Within the context of clashes between the Roman and rabbinic cultures, there can be little doubt that their about-face demonstrates the superiority of Judaism in the face of a threatening dominant culture, but to place the unassailable Onqelos and his record of proselytizing in proper perspective, it is necessary to consider how this narrative fits and reverberates within its larger talmudic framework. Having started with the last story of the cycle that begins with the discussion of the 'Day of Accession', I will take them in reverse order and begin with Qetia.

Between the exchanges of Rabbi and Antoninus and the story of Onqelos' escape, the *Bavli* relates the conversion of Qetia bar Shalom, one of the notables in the court of an unnamed emperor.⁹⁵ Rhetorically, the

⁹³ So Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance', pp. 63–64.

⁹⁴ It occurs to me that *משך* in the expression *משכינהו בקראי*, in the first confrontation with Roman soldiers, may have the connotation of the semantically related *גידא* 'magical arts' in the Onqelos-narrative of *b. Git.* 56b–57a.

⁹⁵ There is disagreement among scholars about the question whether Qetia converted or not. See S. Lieberman, 'The Martyrs of Caesarea', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 7 (1939–1944), pp. 395–446; S.J.D. Cohen, 'The Conversion of Antoninus', in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, 1,

emperor asks his entourage whether a man should cut off a sore on his foot and live comfortably, or not. From the response it transpires that he effectively posits the benefits of 'cutting off' all Jews from the Empire, when Qetia (whose name literally means 'cut off') comes up in their defence and argues that the empire cannot live without the Jews and risks becoming a 'cut-off' empire.⁹⁶ As a consequence for his impertinence to outwit the emperor,⁹⁷ he is sentenced to death. Shortly before being thrown into a furnace, a *matrona* (Roman lady) reminds him: ווי ליה לאילפא דאזלא בלא 'woe to the ship that sails without paying tax!'.⁹⁸ Immediately Qetia trips over, cuts off his foreskin (נפל על רישא דעורלתיה קטעה), exclaims that he has paid his 'tax' and will now 'enter' (the World to Come), and just before he dies he bequeaths his possessions to R. Aqiva and company.⁹⁹ R. Aqiva's acceptance of the inheritance and a heavenly whisper confirm Qetia's reward in the World to Come. His name, then, is overtly symbolical: the son of Peace is cut off for his opposition to cut off the Jews from the empire, but his ties to imperial values have been severed in favour of the World to Come.

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), pp. 141–72 (167); Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance', p. 58. Cohen plausibly suggests that the final line דלא שריה הוא דהא אגיייר is absent from the printed editions because his conversion does not conform to accepted standards (167). H. Jacobson, 'Ketiah Bar Shalom', *AJS Review* 6 (1981), pp. 39–42 attempts to reconstruct the Latin dialogue between the emperor and Qetia on the assumption that it reflects a historical account, now an outdated paradigm.

⁹⁶Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance', argues that Qetia's argument is derived from b. Taan. 3b, where it would fit the context better. The editors selected the argument for its punch-line, so they streamlined the argument and stripped off most of its technical terminology. However, the technical terminology is still there, it has not been cleaned up and the crux arguably fits b. A. Zar. 10b better than b. Taan. 3b where the conclusion—the world cannot live without Israel—is irrelevant to the co-text, whereas it is pivotal in Qetia's plea to the emperor.

⁹⁷Within Babylonian rabbinic culture, it was deemed improper to speak up in the presence of one's master; Kalmin, *The Sage*, pp. 1–5. On hierarchy in the Babylonian academies, see J. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. See also b. Ber. 31b. However, it does not necessarily follow that Qetia's response was therefore considered to be unwise.

⁹⁸In a similar narrative the same saying is used in Deut. R. 2.24.

⁹⁹Thus confirming the rabbinic ruling that a proselyte leaves his inheritance to Jews, not to his gentile kin.

Qetia's acclamation by the heavenly whisper and implicitly by R. Aqiva's acceptance of his possessions elicits the following comment from Rabbi:

בכה רבי ואמר יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת ויש קונה עולמו בכמה שנים
 Rabbi wept and said, There are those who acquire eternity in a single hour,
 and there are others who acquire it after many years!

This response is multi-interpretable: grief for the sad death of a noble Roman mingled with admiration and outright joy over Qetia's acceptance through martyrdom because he did the right thing, sadness over Antoninus' failure to convert, or bitterness over Qetia's instant acquisition of life in the World to Come in the face of the hardship others endure. The main issue is whether he approved of such instant 'acquisition'—a motif running through many Bavli-narratives. The same ambiguity transpires from two other occasions. In b. A. Zar. 17a he laments the repentance of R. Eleazar b. Durdia, who had visited every prostitute he could possibly find up to one particularly dear, desirable and distant prostitute who died in his presence, pronouncing that he would 'never be accepted in repentance'. Eleazar seeks support, but finds none, and realizes only he is responsible. His weeping acceptance of responsibility and failure fails to avert death as punishment for his immorality, but the World to Come will be for him as a heavenly whisper proclaims. Hearing this, Rabbi utters his response about those who acquire the World to Come in an instant, followed by the exasperation: 'Rabbi also said, It is not enough that repentants are accepted, but they are even called "Rabbi"!'. Both statements can be bent in more than one way. Rabbi may have been genuinely happy and taken in by the mercy of Heaven to forgive such ardent sinners upon their show of a genuine morsel of repentance. This does not imply that the editor, who ultimately put the words where they are, shared such a sentiment. For him these words may have been venting his feeling of injustice.

On the next folio, 18a, his words are repeated once more in the lengthy story of the trial and execution of R. Ḥanina b. Teradyon. While he is burning, wrapped in a Tora-scroll and surrounded by wooden sticks, his Roman executioner enters into negotiation with him and offers to increase the heat and remove the wet sponges of wool which have been bound on his

heart to prolong his suffering, following methods the rabbis prohibit,¹⁰⁰ if R. Ḥanina promises him that he, too, will enter the World to Come. The purport of this narrative is thus reminiscent of Qetia's martyrdom and acceptance into the World to Come. When R. Ḥanina gives a positive reply and, upon being pressed, swears to the executioner that he will enter the World to Come (השבע לי נשבע לי), the latter keeps his end of the deal and throws himself into the fire. A heavenly whisper acclaims that both the rabbi and his executioner 'are designated for the life of the World to Come', upon which Rabbi cries his lament on those acquiring the World to Come. The executioner hardly follows praiseworthy methods to achieve the World to Come: negotiation with a dying man, forcing him to swear, and finally committing suicide. Whatever trade-off there was, on the face of the intertexts Rabbi's comment does not appear to reflect joy or approval. But things do not always appear as they are; such inversions occur all too frequently in these narratives as crucial comments on certain realities.

After Rabbi's acknowledgement of Qetia's conversion, the Bavli continues as follows:

אנטונינוס שמשיה לרבי אדרכן שמשיה לרב כי שכיב אנטונינוס א"ר נתפרדה חבילה
כי שכיב אדרכן אמר רב נתפרדה חבילה

Antoninus served Rabbi.

Adarkhan served Rav.

When Antoninus died, Rabbi said, The ties are broken!

When Adarkhan died, Rav said, The ties are broken!

Antoninus and Rabbi are the protagonists of seven stories in the first part of this cycle that follows the halakhic discussion of the *יום גניסיה* 'coronation day'.¹⁰¹ Thus the Qetia-story, including Rabbi's response, is enveloped in the dealings between Antoninus and Rabbi, as is the story of Onqelos which is wedged in between the comment above and a concluding comment on Antoninus and Rabbi. The implication of this structure is that Qetia and Onqelos comment on the Antoninus and Rabbi tradi-

¹⁰⁰ B.A. Berkowitz, *Execution and Invention: Death Penalty Discourse in Early Rabbinic and Christian Cultures* (Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 165–67.

¹⁰¹ There is extensive scholarship on these *aggadot*, but I will keep discussion of them to an absolute minimum. In addition to the sources cited above, n. 95, see, *inter alia*, B.J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (New York: Ktav, 1968), pp. 235–38; Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, pp. 127–28; Cohen, 'The Conversion of Antoninus', pp. 141–72.

tions.¹⁰² These traditions begin with a series of coded messenger exchanges in which Rabbi advises the emperor, and receives daily favours bestowed upon him by Antoninus, until they culminate in Antoninus' question whether he can enter the World to Come. This question is pivotal within the structure of ff. 10a–11a. Just like Qetia's and Onqelos' stories turn on the issue of conversion, so does that of Antoninus here. But Antoninus never quite makes the final step and Rabbi acknowledges as much: 'The cord is snapped', that is the ties are broken.¹⁰³ His 'failure' to convert is a distinctive touch in the Babylonian *gemara*, since the Yerushalmi speculates about his conversion.¹⁰⁴ While Qetia does complete the process, even if the standards by which he does so are hardly exemplary and fall short of more formalised conversion processes elsewhere in the Bavli: a Roman lady spurs him on to circumcise himself, which he accomplishes in haphazard fashion.

Onqelos is the third Roman proselyte to appear after Antoninus and Qetia. Whilst TanB. מַשְׁפָּטִים 3 puts him down as the son of Hadrian's sister—which would have been Aelia Domitia Paulina who was married to the consul Lucius Julius Ursus Servianus—b. A. Zar. 11a identifies him as the son of one Colonicus, as does b. Git. 56b which adds that Colonicus was the husband of Titus' sister (rather than Hadrian's). Epiphanius of Salami claims that 'Aquila was related to the king by marriage and was from Sinope in Pontus'.¹⁰⁵ Although b. A. Zar. 11a does not mention his family connection to the Roman emperor, the parallel of b. Git. 56b and the fact that the emperor sends troops after him hint at a personal connection between them. But this is not history; while his eminent Roman connections are put forward, the exact family relationship, his provenance or indeed the period in which he lived remain unclear. The Tosefta knows nothing about his imperial connections, nor does the

¹⁰² See Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance', pp. 28–54.

¹⁰³ Cf. Porton, *Stranger Within Your Gates*, p. 128; Cohen, 'Conversion of Antoninus', pp. 164–68. For the expression and function of 'the cord is snapped', Gray refers to b. Git. 59b where the expression refers to a broken arrangement, not a personal relationship; Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance', pp. 60–62.

¹⁰⁴ See esp. y. Meg. 1.12(10), 72b (par. 3.1, 74a; both have the negation לֹא crossed out in MS Scal3, while it is absent in the Krotoshin edn, but the context makes its inclusion obvious); y. San. 10.3, 29c.

¹⁰⁵ Epiphanius of Salami, *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* 15, whose account is, however, unlikely to be accurate; see Veltri, *Libraries, Translations*, p. 166. In b. A. Zar. 11a the angry emperor is not identified.

Yerushalmi make such claims. Arguably, these legendary permutations of his lineage may have been informed by the famous conversion to Judaism of Flavia Domitilla, granddaughter of Vespasian, and her husband Clemens, as claimed by Cassius Dio and the Bavli among others.¹⁰⁶ But it is probably unwise to consider קלונימוס a corruption of Clemens, as Gräß claimed,¹⁰⁷ given the overwhelming manuscript evidence in favour of קלוניקוס¹⁰⁸ and the easier explanation that the downstroke of the second ק became partially invisible, resulting in a מ. The memory of Aquila's apparent standing in the Roman world facilitated the blurring of various imperial conversion stories.

Even if legendary, his genealogy carries significance for both stories in the Bavli that mention it. His patronym identifies him as a Roman and has symbolical meaning, just as Qetia bar Shalom's name: the Latin ending -icus in קלוניקוס suggests that we should read Colonicus 'Colonist'. Accordingly, his father is identified as a military veteran who had been granted land by the authorities in return for the fulfilment of his duties, land either wrested from its original Jewish owners or already in Roman hands. As a soldier's son, Onqelos is in a good position to relate to those sent to capture him, but more important are the frontlines implied by his name: the soldiers try to capture a veteran's child, the colonist's son 'colonises' his non-Jewish captors. Most pungently, the patronym takes on additional meaning in the second narrative of Onqelos bar Colonicus in b. Git. 56b–57a since this story belongs to the Bavli's commentary on the law of siqariqon concerning the sale of colonized property.

Just as Qetia's story was wedged between the concluding stages of the Antoninus and Rabbi narrative, so is Onqelos' interlude concluded with a further reflection on the relationship between Antoninus and Rabbi before the gemara resumes the discussion of the Mishna. The final comment on Rabbi and Antoninus rounds off the spectrum of Roman–Jewish relationships:

¹⁰⁶Dio Cassius, *Epitome* 67.14.1–2; Suetonius, *Domitian* 15.1; Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.19–20. Cf. L.H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 100, 310, 332, 347 (four almost identical passages).

¹⁰⁷H. Gräß, 'Jüdisch-geschichtliche Studien', *MGWJ* 1–2.5 (1852), pp. 192–202 (197–98).

¹⁰⁸See p. 450 n. 63 above.

ויאמר ה' לה שני גוים בבטןך אמר רב יהודה אמר רב אל תקרי גוים אלא גיים זה
 אנטונינוס ורבי שלא פסקו מעל שולחנם לא חזרת ולא קישות ולא צנון לא בימות
 החמה ולא בימות הגשמים

'And the LORD said to her, Two nations are in your womb' (Gen. 25.23). Said Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav, Read not *goyim* [nations] but *ge'im* [lords]. This refers to Antoninus and Rabbi from whose table neither lettuce, nor radish nor cucumber were ever absent either in summer or winter.

The citation is an announcement to Rebekah about the birth of her twins, Jacob and Esau. Esau being the rabbinic chiffre for Rome, the identification with Antoninus as Esau = Rome and Rabbi as Jacob = Jerusalem suggests itself not only on the basis of rabbinic typology but also because this conclusion of the cycle links up with its earlier parts in two important ways. Esau as Antoninus harks back to the latter's question whether he will be able to enter the World to Come; Antoninus knows that the members of the house of Esau will be confined to the Netherworld, but the *gemara* makes an exception for him. The biblical text with the announcement to Rebekah contains a further clue: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated (יפרדו) from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger'. Thus Rabbi's exclamation upon the death of Antoninus that 'the cord is snapped' (נתפרדה חבילה) fulfils the prophecy of Gen. 25.23 that the twins shall be separated and that Rome and Jerusalem shall not be at peace but engaged in strife and enmity. 'The ties are broken' reflects both on the emperor's failure to convert and on the polarity of Roman-Jewish relationships, and more likely than not Christian-Jewish relationships (as the second Colonicus-story, below, will illustrate). The deterioration in relations between the emperors and Israel is evident in the series from Antoninus who sought Rabbi's advice, to Qetia's emperor, who sentences him to death for his opposition, and ultimately to the emperor who sought the arrest of Onqelos for the mere fact of his conversion.

Downwards as the spiral of emperors is, the converts are brought up in ascending order. Antoninus studied Tora with Rabbi, as his encounters with Rabbi culminate in his quest for the World to Come in which he quotes Scripture himself,¹⁰⁹ even if his interest and admiration do not

¹⁰⁹I am not convinced that Rabbi's and Antoninus' portrayal is essentially negative. The stories do in fact attest to a slow and concealed movement toward Rabbi (three coded messages, followed by secret visits and personal favours). Gray over-elaborates the

lead to the desirable result. Qetia is implicitly linked to R. Aqiva, but his rabbinic contacts are not disclosed. On Onqelos' rabbinic education this narrative remains entirely silent, but he is the superlative of Antoninus and Qetia with his undisputed conversion, mastery of the Tora and unmistakable rabbinic acceptance—so much resonates in his very name.¹¹⁰ The intertexts link him to leading rabbis while his strength of learning that sees off all attempts to arrest him leave little doubt about his rabbinic status.

Leaving Onqelos aside, the apparent superficiality of gentile attraction to Judaism remains in the case of the three Roman cohorts who convert as if by magic. Other stories suggest that many conversions are born out of fear when the converts realise how God punishes the wrongdoers of his people who therefore seek to escape eternal punishment in the hereafter.¹¹¹ Onqelos is the exception, at least in this narrative; in the mirror-portrait of b. Git. he conforms to a less scrupulous and less convincing standard. A convert he may be, but here he has crossed the boundaries and joined the rabbinic side that is far removed from his Roman antecedents. We can still perceive the similarity with previous narratives in which Onqelos is in dialogue with the emperor, fearful of the reaction to his conversion, but sophisticated in his discourse. Now there is no intimacy left; the punchline emphasizes that any close ties between Aquila/Onqelos and Roman nobility have been severed: 'The emperor sent for him no more'. He has become unassailable. The Bavli portrays Onqelos, detached from

negativity largely on the basis of parallels which do not always convince. For example, the phrase 'do not return bad news', which occurs here and in b. Meg. 15a, is read by Gray as an indication of the king's cruelty ('The Power Conferred by Distance', p. 44); however, in Meg. 15a Esther's messenger does not wish to return bad news to Mordechai, not the king. More importantly, I remain unconvinced that this cycle argues against the avoidance of enmity. Rabbi's complicity in Antoninus' behaviour is only condemned if we read disapproval of attempts to avoid enmity into the cycle—but such notions do not occur in the story, nor its mishnaic springboard. The comparison with Adarkhan also suggests that the relationship was not frowned upon. More importantly, these stories bristle with examples of otherwise unacceptable behaviour which is judged positively, against the grain. In the story of the Roman executioner of R. Ḥanina b. Teradyon his suicide is recontextualized as martyrdom, with a trade-off between his unacceptable actions (forcing the rabbi to swear, blackmailing a dying man, committing suicide) and the ultimate objective, where a professional murderer is accepted into the World to Come.

¹¹⁰ Note that the *gemara* refers to Onqelos' burning of seventy *maneh* for Gamaliel the Elder immediately after this cycle in b. A. Zar. 11a.

¹¹¹ Porton, *Stranger within Your Gates*, p. 201.

the imperial court, as someone who is so well-versed in Tora-wisdom that he entices gentiles by uttering a mere couple of verses and thus vindicates the truth and ultimate strength of Judaism. Not accidentally, his distance to Roman rule is the greatest: Antoninus is emperor, Qetia part of the imperial entourage, while Onqelos is a colonist's son in the provinces.

Were such swift conversions deemed commendable in the Bavli? The more rigidly organized society in Babylonia may have viewed the far more fluid boundaries in Palestine with suspicion.¹¹² The fact that Onqelos is more successful does not immediately imply that these conversions were deemed felicitous. Inversions of appropriate behaviour within the matrix of Roman-Jewish relationships are paramount in these stories. There are several other stories of instant-conversion in the Bavli, or prominent enemies who change allegiance. The story-cycle that extends from b. Git. 55b to 58a includes a series of conversion stories that deal with former enemies: a general sent to suppress Israel, Sennacherib, Sisera, Haman's offspring, Nebuzaradan, Nero—and Onqelos. Their reason to convert is rooted in fear of Israel's God and their impending punishment. In b. Git. 56a Nero discovers during his siege of Jerusalem that in whatever direction he shoots an arrow it always lands in the city. To understand the divine meaning behind this phenomenon, he asks a boy to recite the verse he is studying at that very moment—a practice known as cleromancy, in which a randomly selected or overheard verse, often involving schoolboys, is taken as an omen.¹¹³ The boy recites Ezek. 25.14, announcing the revenge of God on Edom, which Nero understands as punishment for Rome. He takes the hint, converts to Judaism, and R. Meir is said to have descended from him. That such high-profile conversions may lead to prominent rabbis is also attested in b. Git. 57b, where Shemaya and Avtalyon, two legendary leaders of the pre-rabbinic movement in the Second Commonwealth, are described as the descendants of Sennacherib.

Prima facie all this might amount to a positive stance on proselytism, but such a reading misses the point. The polarity is such that the non-Jew

¹¹² See Kalmin, *The Sage*, pp. 1–5. I do not see 'the Babylonian openness to converts' in the Bavli; *pace* Gray, 'The Power Conferred by Distance', p. 69.

¹¹³ For cleromancy, see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, pp. 194–99; P.W. van der Horst, 'Sortes: Sacred Books as Instant Oracles in Late Antiquity', in L.V. Rutgers et al. (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (CBET, 22; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), pp. 143–73. Further rabbinic examples are found in b. Ber. 55b; b. Hag. 15a–b; b. Hul. 95b; Midr. Prov. 6.20; b. Git. 68a; Gen. R. 52.4; Est. R. 3.9; Midr. Ps. 93.8.

faces either assimilation to Judaism or enmity; a medium course that fails to deliver conversion such as the break-down of Rabbi's relationship with Antoninus confirms the existential strife between two former brothers. These stories raise the prospect of conversion within a very specific literary setting, and no matter how widespread the motif is of a ruler who converts from one faith to another, ultimately the way it is embedded in this story-cycle determines its narrative function and scope. Illustrative of this phenomenon is the parallel to b. A. Zar. 11a in b. Git. 56b–57a, which attracted ample attention, not in the least because of the occurrence of Jesus (in the manuscripts; the printed edition refers to the 'sinners of Israel'). I will not analyse the cycle in detail, but try to answer how the Onqelos-narrative functions within the larger whole of the story-cycle to establish what this implies for the reception of the Aquila-traditions (b. Git. 56b–57a):

אונקלוס בר קלניקוס בר אחתיה דטיטוס¹¹⁴ הוה בעי לאיגורי אזל אסקיה לטיטוס
בנגידא¹¹⁵ אמר ליה מאן חשיב בההוא עלמא אמר ליה¹¹⁶ ישראל מהו¹¹⁷ לאידבוקי
בהו אמר ליה¹¹⁸ מילייהו נפישין ולא מצית לקוימניהו זיל¹¹⁹ איגרי בהו בההוא עלמא
והוית רישא דכתיב היו צריה לראש¹²⁰ כל המוצר לישראל נעשה ראש אמר ליה דיניה
דההוא גברא במאי א"ל במאי דפסיק אנפשיה כל יומא מכנפי¹²¹ ליה לקיטמיה ודייני
ליה וקלו ליה ומבדרי ליה¹²² אשב ימי אזל¹²³ אסקיה לבלעם¹²⁴ בנגידא אמר ליה מאן
חשיב בההוא עלמא א"ל ישראל מהו¹²⁵ לאידבוקי בהו א"ל לא תדרוש שלומם וטובתם
כל הימים¹²⁶ א"ל דיניה דההוא גברא במאי א"ל¹²⁷ בשכבת זרע רותחת אזל אסקיה

¹¹⁴For דאדריינוס, some MSS have דטיטוס.

¹¹⁵An interlinear gloss in Vat30 explains נגידא as אוב; so also Rashi.

¹¹⁶For אמר ליה, Vat30 reads להו א' (error).

¹¹⁷In Vat30, the question is preceded by אמ"ל. See also nn. 125 and 129 below.

¹¹⁸The phrase אמר ליה is absent from Vat40.

¹¹⁹Vat40 has a plus אלא preceding this word.

¹²⁰Vilna concludes the citation with וגי.

¹²¹Mun95, Vat30 and Vat40 agree in their reading מכנפי over against Vilna's מכנשי.

¹²²For ומבדרי ליה וקלו ליה ומבדרי ליה (so Mun95 and Vat40, with Vilna reading ומבדר ומבדרי ליה), Vat40 reads לקיטמיה (ומבדרי ליה).

¹²³For אזל, Vat40 reads אתא.

¹²⁴At a linebreak in Vat30, the words אסקיה לבלעם are missing, but supplied by another hand in the margin. In Vat40, again at a linebreak, בנגידא is missing.

¹²⁵In Vat30, the question is preceded by אמ"ל and in Mun95 by ל.

¹²⁶Instead of MT's כל ימי חיך, supported by Mun95, Vat30 reads כל ימי חיך, Vilna כל הימים, while Vat40 does not cite the phrase but ends the citation with וטובתם.

¹²⁷In Vat40, א"ל is not attested.

ליש¹²⁸ בנגידא א"ל מאן חשיב בההוא עלמא א"ל ישראל מהו¹²⁹ לאדבוקי בהו¹³⁰ א"ל¹³¹ טובתם דרוש רעתם לא¹³² תדרוש כל¹³³ הנוגע בהן כאילו¹³⁴ נוגע בבבת עיני א"ל דינייה דההוא גברא במאי א"ל בצואה רותחת דאמר מר כל¹³⁵ המלעיג על דברי חכמים נידון בצואה רותחת תא חזי מה¹³⁶ בין פושעי ישראל לנביאי אומות העולם¹³⁷ תניא אמר רבי אלעזר¹³⁸ בא וראה כמה גדולה כחה של בושא שהרי סייע הקב"ה את בר קמצא והחריב את ביתו ושרף את היכלו

Onqelos the son of Colonicus, the son of 'Titus' sister, wanted to convert to Judaism.

He went and raised Titus [from the dead] by necromancy.

He said to him, Who is most important in that world?

He said to him, Israel.

¹²⁸The MSS read ישו פושעי ישראל for ישו (Son1488 has a minus here); Vat130 and a marginal gloss in Vat140 read ישו הנוצרי. For the dialogue, all witnesses read א"ל, which can be a plural or singular. In the Vilna edn בנגידא precedes the 'sinners of Israel', the MSS have it after Jesus in the same word order with Titus and Bilam. This suggests that the original reading was 'Jesus' or 'Jesus the Nazarene', which was erased (so Son1488), and that the reading 'sinners of Israel' was supplemented secondarily to the erasure. It is intrinsically more likely that Onqelos would have entreated a person after raising Balaam and Titus, while (self-) censorship explains how the reading 'Jesus' disappeared from the text. Christian pressure aside, the placing of Jesus among the 'sinners of Israel' in the conclusion may have been the trigger for the substitution in part of the textual tradition.

¹²⁹In Vat130, the question is preceded by א"ל.

¹³⁰In Mun95, בהו is not attested.

¹³¹In Vat140, א"ל is not attested.

¹³²Vat140 seems to read לא כל for לא, a scribal error; Mun95 reads אל.

¹³³In Vat130, the argument is preceded by כי.

¹³⁴The phrase הנוגע בהן כנוגע בבבת עיני is almost identical to Zech. 2.12: הנגע בכס נגע (Vat140 בבבת עיני). The word כאילו in Vilna is missing in Vat130, Vat140 and Mun95. It is similar to TgJon's supplement of כיד in Zech. 2.12, which replaces the metaphor (touching his eyes) with a comparison (as [if] touching his eyes) in keeping with other targumic representations of biblical metaphors; see Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, p. 85; F. Böhl, 'Die Metaphorisierung in den Targumim zum Pentateuch', FJB 15 (1987), pp. 111–49; Smelik, 'Concordance and Consistency', pp. 301–302; R. Kashner, 'Metaphor and Allegory in the Aramaic Translations of the Bible', JAB 1 (1999), pp. 53–77; Van Staaldoune-Sulman, *Targum of Samuel*, pp. 105–107. This translation may 'avoid the suggestion that one can literally touch God's eyes'; Cathcart and Gordon, *Targum to the Minor Prophets*, p. 189 n. 20.

¹³⁵For כל מר דאמר מר in Vat140 and Vilna, Vat130 and Mun95 read שכל.

¹³⁶In Mun95 מה בין נביאי אומות is not attested. Vat140 inverts the word order: תא חזי מה בין נביאי אומות העולם לפושעי ישר.

¹³⁷The Vilna edn has a plus after this word, עובדי ע"ז 'who worship idols', which is absent from MSS Mun95, Vat130 and Vat140.

¹³⁸Vat140 reads רבי אלעזר שמע' בן אלעז'.

[He said to him,] what about joining them?

He said to him, Their practices are numerous and you will not be able to carry them out. Go and attack them in that world and you will be at the top as it is written, 'Her adversaries are become the head' (Lam. 1.5); whoever harasses Israel becomes head.¹³⁹

He said to him, What is your punishment [in that world]?

He said to him, What I decreed for myself. Every day my ashes are reassembled and sentence is passed on me and I am burnt and my ashes are scattered over the seven seas.

He went and raised Bilam by necromancy.

He said to him, Who is most important in that world?

He said to him, Israel.

What about joining them?

He said to him, 'You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days for ever' (Deut. 23.7).

He said to him, What is your punishment?

He said to him, With boiling hot semen.

He went and raised Jesus by necromancy.

He said to him, Who is most important in that world?

He said to him, Israel.

He said to him, What about joining them?

He said to him, Seek their welfare, seek not their harm. Whoever touches them touches the apple of his eye.¹⁴⁰

He said to him, What is your punishment?

He said, With boiling faeces.

As a Master has said, Whoever mocks at the words of the sages is punished with boiling faeces.

Come and see the difference between the sinners of Israel and the prophets of the nations of the world.

It was taught, Said R. Eleazar, Come and see how great the strength of shame is, for the Holy One blessed be He espoused the cause of Bar Qamša and destroyed His House and burnt His Temple.

The tenor of this narrative stands in stark contrast to the previous narratives in the Tosefta, the Yerushalmi and the Midrashim. This Onqelos wants to convert for the wrong reason, namely to be important in 'that world', so he interviews all the wrong persons— Titus, Bilam, and Jesus,

¹³⁹Cf. b. San. 104b.

¹⁴⁰See n. 134 above.

two non-Jews and a heretic or apostate—by means of necromancy, a practice plainly prohibited by the Tora.¹⁴¹ His conversion is a quest to curry favour with the powers to be in ‘that world’, yet he questions those people who once were important persona in this world but now find themselves in the Netherworld or Gehenna. The expression ‘that world’ is intentionally ambiguous: importance in the Netherworld does not amount to much. The satire, endemic to this story, leads to the answer that Israel comes out on top. It is a nice touch that Onqelos starts his interrogation with his uncle, who also represents the literary link to the preceding destruction stories. It is even more to the point that Titus leaves him little hope, as he reminds him that full observance of Jewish commands is far too heavy a burden—presumably echoing Jewish self-reflection on the burden of the law rather than Roman observations, given the pagan Roman exasperation at Jewish laziness. There is more sarcasm on the way to this conclusion: Titus advises Onqelos to attack Israel so as to rule the world; yet he is now in ashes. Bilam advises against seeking their peace and welfare, but his own attempt at cursing them (Num. 24) was thwarted by divine intervention. Jesus’ advice may be the opposite of Bilam’s but is probably no less ironical: Jesus urging to seek the welfare of Jews?¹⁴² By Byzantine times Christian oppression had become rampant enough for some Church leaders to call for restraint. That Jesus finds himself in the company of Titus and Bilam denies his resurrection and blissful state in heaven. The surface message is that Israel will triumph, whereas its enemies will suffer, including Jesus, not quite the Son of God.

There is no reason to believe we are dealing with another Onqelos here: his name, patronym, conversion and imperial connections clearly link the stories together. We are dealing with a different guise for the same literary persona, but one whose actions seem to be out of character. The story is without parallel in rabbinic literature, even if it bears some relationship to an oral tradition that was independently utilized in the *Martyrium Pionii*, which links Jesus as a *biothanatus* to Jewish necromancy.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹Deut. 18.10–11.

¹⁴²His advice is construed positively as a ‘call to protect the lives of the Jews’ by I.J. Yuval, ‘Two Nations in Your Womb’: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 56; D. Flusser, ‘Jesus’, *EJ* 11 (2007), pp. 249–50. See below.

¹⁴³S. Gero, ‘Jewish Polemic in the *Martyrium Pionii* and a “Jesus” Passage from the Talmud’, *JJS* 29 (1978), pp. 164–68; J. den Boeft, ‘*Notiunculue Martyrologicae* III.

The literary setting goes a long way to explaining the tenor of this legend. Onqelos the Necromancer is part of a grand narrative that spans b. Git. 55b–58a in three complex tales of destruction:¹⁴⁴ the (Second) Temple of Jerusalem, the King's Mountain, and Bar Kokhva's stronghold of Bethar. The cycle of three tales, involving many sub-plots, is framed, on the one hand, by the corresponding mishna (m. Git. 5.6) to which the gemara is related, and on the other hand by an introductory comment of R. Yoḥanan about the three destructions. The opening of each of the three tales recaps R. Yoḥanan's statement briefly. R. Yoḥanan's expository remark sets the scene for the three tales as follows (f. 55b):

אמר רבי יוחנן מאי דכתיב אשרי אדם מפחד תמיד ומקשה לבו יפול ברעה אקמצא
ובר קמצא חרוב ירושלים אתרנגולא ותרנגולתא חרוב טור מלכא אשקא דריספק חרוב
ביתר

Said Yoḥanan, What [does it mean] when it is written, 'Happy is the man who is always anxious, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity' (Prov. 28.14)? The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Qamṣa and a Bar Qamṣa; the destruction of the King's Mountain came through a cock and a hen; the destruction of Bethar came through the shaft of a leather.

The calamity of the proverb thus applies to the destruction of Jerusalem, among other disasters, because some people hardened their heart. Ostentatiously, Bar Qamṣa hardens his heart when his dignity is offended at a banquet through a simple mistake, but as the story unwinds itself it becomes obvious that he nor his anonymous host are the real culprits. Bar Qamṣa directs his anger at the rabbis who did not intervene in the scandal that occurred.¹⁴⁵ Their moment of hardening the heart came when Bar Qamṣa arranged for a blemished animal to be sacrificed on behalf of the emperor, which the rabbis were inclined to accept 'for the sake of peace

Observations on the Martyria of Polycarp and Pionius', *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985), pp. 110–30 (117–18).

¹⁴⁴Weiss, על היצירה הספרותית, pp. 261–63; E. Yassif, 'The Cycle of Tales in Rabbinic Literature', *JSHL* 12 (1990), pp. 103–46; Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors*, pp. 43–50; Yuval, 'Two Nations', pp. 49–56; J.L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 139–75; P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 82–94. See further M. Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion, 7; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. 148–50; Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia*, pp. 43–50.

¹⁴⁵For a detailed analysis, see Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 147–60.

with the kingdom', but R. Zekharya b. Avqulos did not, as people might get the wrong idea.

How do these amendments relate to the tale of Jerusalem's destruction? In *Talmudic Stories*, Rubenstein makes a convincing case for legal elasticity as the connection between the *mishna* and the *gemara*. The *mishna* deals with the purchase of property in Roman hands, seized from their original owners by the Roman government or Jewish collaborators. Known as the law of *siqariqon*, it belongs to a series of rabbinic legal amendments promulgated 'for the sake of good order' and 'in the interests of peace', running from m. Git. 4.2 to 5.9.¹⁴⁶ The legal innovation addresses the undesirable social effects of a too stringent application of the law. Since few properties changed hands and many remained under Roman ownership, reducing the price to be paid to the original owners paved the way to more agricultural productivity and Jewish ownership. Thus the admittedly not ideal amendment is justifiable. At this point the connection with the talmudic narrative becomes apparent, for in the story of Bar Qamša the rabbis do not bend the law 'for the sake of peace', even though the law itself is not even that indisputable; their refusal to take action results in the dramatic loss of the Temple. This first tale can be read as a subtle commentary on the controversial status of such rabbinic amendments.

By contrast, Yuval reads the first tale as a Jewish counter-narrative about the loss of the Temple which competes with parallel Christian understandings of the destruction. It is not difficult to identify why their interpretations differ so starkly, for Yuval pays no attention to the literary and halakhic embedding of the stories, whereas Rubenstein cuts the first leg of the cycle short by about one third. As he omits the narratives of Titus and Onqelos, Rubenstein does not have to enter into a discussion with Yuval's view that the position of Jesus' words 'at the conclusion of the entire cycle of legends of the Destruction indicate the centrality of Jesus' words in connection with the Destruction of Jerusalem'.¹⁴⁷

A direct reference to R. Yoḥanan's opening statement, that follows Onqelos' story, concludes the first part of the cycle: 'It was taught, Said R. Eleazar, Come and see how great the strength of shame is, for the Holy One blessed be He espoused the cause of Bar Qamša and destroyed His House and burnt His Temple'. Even apart from this there can be little doubt that

¹⁴⁶ For the halakhic and literary context, see Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 160–65.

¹⁴⁷ Yuval, *Two Nations*, p. 56. Rubenstein does not cite Yuval.

the stories about Titus, the gnat and Onqelos still belong to the first leg of the cycle. They deal with the aftermath of the war: the destruction of the Temple, Titus' grandstanding, his death and punishment.

The first tale also has a distinct redactional feature. In contrast to the following tales about the King's Mountain and Bethar, these stories stand out as an independent collection of stories which are not voiced by any rabbi. Instead, the voiced comments on the narrative serve as a meta-text on the story itself. Apart from the opening and the conclusion, there are five such comments in this first tale, all of which presuppose the story and interrupt it at key moments. That R. Zekharya b. Avqulos refuses to accept Bar Qamša's blemished animal for sacrifice leads R. Yoḥanan to remark that the Temple has been burnt down and Jerusalem destroyed because of the legal paralysis of R. Zekharya b. Avqulos.¹⁴⁸ When Martha, a wealthy Jerusalemite, dies in search of food, Rabban Yoḥanan b. Zakkay applies to her the verse, 'And she who is most tender and dainty among you, so [tender and dainty] that she would never venture to set a foot on the ground' (Deut. 28.56). This pivotal verse evokes the curses in Deut. 28 which forebode the starvation and exile that awaits Jerusalem.¹⁴⁹ Two further attributed sayings reflect critically on the negotiation of R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkay with Vespasian, who saved 'a little', but had he been more proactive, perhaps Jerusalem's fate would not have been quite so irreversible.¹⁵⁰ In all of these comments the connection between the Talmudic cycle and the mishnaic amendments is upheld.

Another theme in the cycle becomes apparent when the Talmud continues with the response of Abba Ḥanan to the gross act of blasphemy which Titus commits in the Temple (omitted by Rubenstein). After Titus engaged in sexual intercourse with a prostitute on a Tora-scroll within the Holy of Holies, he slashed the curtain with his sword and as the curtain spurted blood, he believed he had killed God. At this point in the narrative, the battle between the Romans and the Jews has become a battle between emperor and God. Still God remains silent:

אבא חנן אומר מי כמוך חסין יה מי כמוך חסין וקשה שאתה שומע ניאוצו וגידופו של
אותו רשע ושותק דבי רבי ישמעאל תנא מי כמוכה באלים ה' מי כמוכה באלמים

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors*, p. 149.

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed account, see N.G. Cohen, 'The Theological Stratum of the Martha b. Boethus Tradition. An Explication of the Text in "Gittin" 56a', *HTR* 69 (1976), pp. 187–195.

¹⁵⁰ So Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 157–58.

Abba Hanan says, 'Who is mighty like You, O LORD? (Ps. 89.9) Who is like you, mighty in self-restraint, that you hear the blaspheming and insults of that wicked man and keep silent? In the school of R. Ishmael it was taught, 'Who is like you among the gods?' (Exod. 15.11) Who is like you among the mute.¹⁵¹

The two comments recall psalmodic cries about how long God will hide Himself,¹⁵² perhaps to provoke Him into redemptive action in the face of disaster, perhaps in despair over such repellent behaviour, but ultimately in recognition of the narrative line that God orchestrated the great destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem and even endured Roman brazenness to achieve His own objectives.¹⁵³ Although Titus dies a gruesome death by a gnat that enters his brain after the intervention of a heavenly whisper, hinting at both God's ultimate direction of all events and his punitive actions, He does not stop the Romans from destroying the Temple and exiling His people. As Nero guessed, God uses the Romans for his own ends but does not let them off for the crimes they commit. Nero took the right course of action; Titus did not.

The narrative of Onqelos elaborates on the silence of God and His retribution. It revolves around two motifs: reward and punishment in 'that world', that is the hereafter, and adversity or attraction to Judaism in the present world. Onqelos represents reward and conversion, like Nero, whose offspring is Jewish, whereas his interviewees Titus, Bilam and Jesus were prominent antagonists who once subdued Israel, a situation inverted by their present suffering. Titus' battle against God is a motif Jesus evokes when warning Onqelos that whoever touches Israel touches the apple of His eye.¹⁵⁴

The punishment of Titus, Bilam and Jesus exemplifies the mishnaic principle of 'measure for measure': להווי ליקליוה להווי כי הוה קא מיית אמר להו ליקליוה להווי גברא ולבדרי לקיטמיה אשב ימי דלא לשכחיה אלהא דיהודאי ולוקמיה בדינא 'When he died he said, Burn me and scatter my ashes over the seven seas so that the God of the Jews should not find me and bring me to trial'.

¹⁵¹This interpretation is a play on the word בָּאֵלִים, read as בְּאֵלִים.

¹⁵²See Pss. 13.1; 27.5; 30.7; 88.14; 89.47; 143.7; Isa. 8.17; Mic. 3.4.

¹⁵³The conclusion at the end of the first tale confirms that God 'espoused the cause of Bar Qamṣa and destroyed His House and burnt His Temple'. Cf. R. Goldenberg, 'Early Rabbinic Explanations of the Destruction of Jerusalem', *JJS* 33 (1982), pp. 517–25 (522).

¹⁵⁴Cf. b. San. 58b, based on Prov. 20.25.

His wish is granted but simultaneously inverted: every day his ashes are collected from all over the world to be sentenced, burned and scattered all over again. There is no escape from God's judgment. Burning Titus not only fulfils his own wishes, commensurate with the Roman military tradition of cremation, but is also highly appropriate for the general who burned down the Temple of Jerusalem. Thereby his punishment follows the basic rule of *מדה כנגד מדה* 'measure for measure'.¹⁵⁵

Bilam's punishment by boiling semen follows suit. Following Bilam's prophecy in Num. 24, the Israelites reportedly moved on to lay with Moabite women in 25.1. The continuity in these two distinct chapters is exploited in rabbinic exegesis:¹⁵⁶ in the last verse of Num. 24 the Palestinian Targums explain that Bilam instigated the seduction of male Israelites by female Midianites. That Balaq 'went his way' is read as if Balaq followed Bilam's way by taking the latter's advice to set up his daughters as prostitutes,¹⁵⁷ which b. San. 106a interprets as an attempt to rob the Israelites of their offspring. His punishment by boiling hot semen thus mirrors a crime that consisted of diverting Israelite semen.

The punishment of Jesus by boiling faeces is less transparent. The anonymous explanation by 'a master' relates this method of punishment to ridiculizing the words of the sages, but this gloss probably hails from b. Eruv. 21b where it is used to explain Qoh. 12.12¹⁵⁸—indeed, the phrase *אמר מר* sometimes introduces an Amoraic statement that is attributed to a named Sage elsewhere.¹⁵⁹ In his *Jesus in the Talmud* Schäfer recently related the punishment to one of Jesus' arguments with the Pharisees, namely that purity and impurity depend not so much on what goes into the mouth as on what goes out of it.¹⁶⁰ It follows that eating food without washing the

¹⁵⁵ See m. Sot. 1.1-9.

¹⁵⁶ Following the famous rule of R. Aqiva that a section in close proximity to another may be read in the light of the other passage. See Sifre Num. 131 (edn Horovitz, pp. 170-71); Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, I, pp. 132-33; II, pp. 142-43.

¹⁵⁷ TgNeof, TgPsJ and FragTg Num. 24.25; cf. Num. 24.14 and 31.16. This motif already occurs in LAB 18.13. For the development of the traditions concerning Bilam, see G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (2nd edn, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), pp. 127-77 (162-64).

¹⁵⁸ So Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, pp. 88-89; cf. J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), p. 96.

¹⁵⁹ Epstein, *מבוא לניסח*, II, p. 795. Note, however, the variant noted in n. 135 above.

¹⁶⁰ Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, pp. 91-94.

hands does not defile a person, because the food eventually ends up in the sewer, but impurity of the mind defiles a person. Accordingly, his suffering in boiling excrement would be a punishment in kind with the excrement representing the impurity that goes into the mouth, just as the cremation of Titus reflects his burning the Temple, or Bilam's boiling semen reflects his scheme to lure the Jews into sexual misdeameanours. Schäfer goes on to suggest that the motif of excrement may poke fun at the Eucharist, when Jesus' flesh is ritually consumed, by contrasting the consumption of the hostie to the excrement this practice produces. Inventive as his suggestions are, they remain entirely speculative. Yet there is a clear point of reference for the motif of faeces in the exegetical tradition of Ezek. 28 about the king of Tyre, identified as Hiram in rabbinic and patristic literature,¹⁶¹ who claimed divine status for himself. In an expository addition to its translation of Ezek. 28.13, TgJon offers a rebuttal of this claim:

כל אלן עבדת תקונך בכין ראים לבך ברם לא אסתכלתא בפגורך דאת עביד¹⁶² חללק
ונקבין דאיתון צורכך דלא אפשר לך דתתקיים בלא בהון

All these [precious stones] were the work of your adornment. Then your heart grew proud, but you did not reflect wisely on your body, as you were made with organs and orifices which you need, for it is impossible for you to survive without them.

This principle is reflected in one of the changes which the seventy(-two) translators made when they rendered the Tora in Greek: Gen. 5.2's זכר ונקבה בראם is changed into זכר ונקביו בראו 'a male with orifices He created him'.¹⁶³ Thus the translators underlined that Adam may have been created in God's likeness, but a god he was not. In similar vein, Rav Yehuda

¹⁶¹ Gen. R. 9.5; 96.5; b. B. Bat. 75a; b. H. ul. 89a; L. Ginzberg, *Die Haggada bei den Kirchenvätern und in der apokryphischen Literatur* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1900), pp. 126–28.

¹⁶² Sperber reads דאת עביד at this point, with only one MS pointing the verb as a passive participle. The CAL project suggests the emendation into איתעביד, which is plausible, but goes against all published manuscript evidence including the Tosefta-Targum (as published by R. Kasher, *תוספתות תרגום לנביאים*, 2 (מקורות לחבר תרבות ישראל, Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1996), p. 198). For an analysis of the Tosefta, see now also A. Damsma, *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel* (SAIS, 13; Leiden: Brill, 2012).

¹⁶³ Variant readings have בראם and/or ונקבה; see Veltri, *Eine Tora*, pp. 31–47. That this tradition reflects the androgynous status of Adam was argued long ago, but the connection with TgJon Ezek. 28.13 has been overlooked. See further D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 72–73; E. Tov, 'Did the Septuagint Translators Always Understand Their Hebrew Text?', in A. Pietersma and C. Cox (eds.), *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honour of John William Wevers* (Mississauga: Benben Publications,

in the name of Rav claims that God created humankind with orifices to refute Hiram's future claims that he too is god (b. B. Bat. 75a).¹⁶⁴ Tan. וַאֲרָא 14 extends the connection between Hiram's boast to be a god and his inevitable evacuation to Pharaoh, who Moses confronts when he secretly relieves himself by the Nile to hide his human status.¹⁶⁵ Likewise TgPsJ Exod. 7.23 interprets MT's וַיִּפֶּן פֶּרֶעָה אֶסְרָה as 'and Pharaoh defecated', and whilst it does not refer to Pharaoh's divinity, the reason for its unusual translation is probably found in the desire to demystify his status.¹⁶⁶ If bodily functions are directly related to claims of divinity, it stands to reason that this legend takes aim at Christian beliefs about the Son's divinity. By his punishment in boiling excrement, Jesus received his just deserts for his heresy, once more illustrating the principle of 'measure for measure'.

The conclusion of Onqelos' inquiries urges the reader to 'come and see the difference between the sinners of Israel and the prophets of the nations of the world'. Is there a difference? Their fantastic punishments imply there is none. They share the same burning fate in Gehenna as three classes of sinners for whom there will be no end to suffering: attackers of the Temple (Titus), gentile prophets (Bilam) and Israelite heretics (Jesus). Following t. San. 13.3-5 (or its parallel in b. A. Zar. 17a), both Jewish and gentile sinners ordinarily suffer Gehenna for twelve months before their souls perish and their bodies are burnt, but an exception is made for heretics, apostates and those who raised their hand against the Temple, all of whom will be locked in Gehenna for all generations. The Bavli evidently applies a similar reasoning to Titus, Bilam and Jesus. Indeed, the very fact that they remain in Gehenna explains why Onqelos could raise them, and denies any difference between them other than their sins.¹⁶⁷

1984), pp. 53-70 (reprinted in E. Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* [VTSup. 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999], pp. 203-18); Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁴Cf. b. Ber. 60b.

¹⁶⁵Cf. TanB. וַאֲרָא 16. See further Exod. R. 9.8; MHG 2, 67; Midrash Aggada Exod. 8.16 (edn Buber, Vienna 1894). The motif of divine claims has Hiram grouped together with Pharaoh, Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar elsewhere, too, e.g. Mek. שִׁירָה 8 (pp. 142-43), but without the motif of defecation.

¹⁶⁶Although it is possible to interpret וַיִּפֶּן פֶּרֶעָה in TgPsJ's way, the immediate co-text indicates that Pharaoh turned to enter his palace, distraught by the events that took place.

¹⁶⁷The corresponding mishna does not make the distinction, although it does include Bilam explicitly among those who have no portion in the World to Come (m. San. 10.2).

This satirical question is presumably latched onto the story of Onqelos because the talmudic labelling of 'sinners of Israel' and 'prophets of the nations' is slightly off the mark. Although apostates and heretics were usually treated as entirely gentile, they would still preserve something of their Israelite identity,¹⁶⁸ so it is not surprising that Jesus is addressed as one of the 'sinners of Israel', while Bilam was considered a pagan prophet of a standing similar to that of Moses.¹⁶⁹ But what about Titus, who is neither Israelite sinner nor gentile prophet? He certainly belongs in the story as Onqelos' uncle, whose presence forms the link between this legend and the destruction stories; moreover, on the back of t. San. 13.5, the destroyer of the Second Temple qualifies for eternal punishment. What appears to have happened is that the two labels of Israelite sinners and gentile prophets were borrowed from elsewhere and secondarily applied to this story to maximize its satirical force.

What differs between them is their advice to Onqelos. After agreeing that Israel comes out on top in that world, they advise him differently with a progressive improvement from Titus who advocates warfare and oppression, over Bilam who advises him to keep his distance, to Jesus urging Onqelos to seek the welfare of Israel. The latter option is tantamount to conversion in its context, but also makes a separate point: fighting Israel is battling with God. Yuval emphasizes the climactic position of Jesus' words at the end of the first tale, interpreting them as 'a basis for the rights of the Jews through a "command" that came from the mouth of the founder of the new religion', mirroring Augustin's doctrine to steer clear of harming the Jews.¹⁷⁰ But whose ears are supposed to heed this advice? It is hard to see how any Christian would have been persuaded by this eccentric and highly offensive story to protect the lives of the Jews, not even in the perception of the author(s). Nor should we forget about Bilam and Titus in identifying the purport of the narrative as a whole.

Ultimately, the answer is related to another question: why is this story woven around Onqelos? The story is not in line with any other portrayal of Onqelos, although certain features do point to b. A. Zar. 11a where Onqelos occupies a similar climactic position in the cycle—as a convert

¹⁶⁸ Stern, *Jewish Identity*, pp. 120–26.

¹⁶⁹ Sifre Deut. 457.10; b. B. Bat. 15b; Tan. בלק 1; T. d. Eliyy. (edn Friedmann, p. 191); Num. R. 14.20. Cf. TgNeof and TgPsJ Num. 24.3, 15 and Gen. 27.29.

¹⁷⁰ Yuval, *Two Nations*, p. 56.

steeped in Tora-wisdom. The only parallel in *Martyrium Plonii* concerns the necromancy of Jesus, not Bilam or Titus, and has nothing to do with Onqelos. The key is his reputation as a convert. Woven into this grand fabric of three destructions are several conversion stories: Nero and Onqelos in the tale of Jerusalem; Nevuzaradan, Sisera, Sennacherib and others in that of Bethar. All of these concern former enemies of Israel, such as Nevuzaradan, the Babylonian executioner, who in fear of the consequences of his killings converted to Judaism. Many of these converts, such as the executioner of R. Ḥanina b. Teradyon in b. A. Zar. 18a, transgress the *halakha* on their way to Judaism. These stories suggest that Roman-Jewish relationships consist of three options: enmity and warfare, separation and isolation,¹⁷¹ or conversion. Jesus' advice should not be isolated from the others, but read as one of the three different attitudes toward Jews which these three men espouse in response to a would-be convert. In b. A. Zar. 11a Onqelos concludes the series of Antoninus, Qetia and Onqelos as a convert of Roman extraction who crossed the boundaries between the colonizers and the Israelites. In *Gittin*, too, he represents the Roman imperial involvement with Judaism and concludes a series of Roman protagonists, starting with Nero, who absconded and converted, followed by Vespasian who granted Yoḥanan the opportunity to save 'a little', Titus, who burnt the Temple and died a horrible death, to Onqelos as Titus' nephew.

Onqelos thus represents one extreme of the Roman-Jewish interaction, that of the attentive student who converts to Judaism and exposes Israel's eventual superiority as a Roman non-Jew. Even the deplorable methods and doubtful intentions demonstrate both the erroneous ways of non-Jews and the fact that even non-Jewish methods of divine enquiry attest to Israel's superiority. If we are light-years away from the scrupulous proselyte who outdoes Rabban Gamaliel the Second, this is because familiar motifs such as his conversion and connection to Roman imperial families are subsumed under the header of Gentiles versus Jews, the continuing story. All this implies that the editors of the cycle—which has many parallels in Palestinian sources that have been adapted and reworked

¹⁷¹ Bilam's advice is based on Deut. 23.7, which ironically applied to Amnon and Moab, but is echoed in Ezra 9.12 where it applies to the indigenous people of the land.

to create a uniquely Babylonian grand narrative¹⁷²—had little affinity with the original Greek translator.

9.5 The justification for translation

The Bavli mentions the translations by Onqelos and Yonatan by name once only, in b. Meg. 3a.¹⁷³ This dearth of references is remarkable, because attributions of translated passages to Rav Yoseph as well as the phrase ‘as we translate’ occur more than a dozen times. Since we assume, on the basis of extant manuscripts and literary references, that these Targums were cultivated in Babylon, modern scholarship usually does not attach much significance to the attribution of both translations to the Palestinian Tannaim Onqelos and Yonatan beyond the obvious recognition that these attributions claim a certain antiquity, hence authority, for the translations under discussion.

Even the single occurrence of Targum Onqelos and Targum Jonathan in b. Meg. 3a is casual, or so it seems. It occurs in the wake of a discussion about the definition of a city, in relation to the way Purim is to be celebrated in different places. Part of the answer contains an unclear attribution to either Yirmeya or, as others said, R. Ḥiyya b. Abba. Enter three additional traditions which are attributed to either Yirmeya or R. Ḥiyya b. Abba: one about final letter forms, one about translation, and one about the relative standing of Daniel in comparison to the Prophets. Stringing seemingly random traditions together in this way is something which the Talmud often does; the three traditions linked to the first bear no relationship to the main question, which is the extent to which a village counts as part of a nearby city; the only common denominator is the questioned attribution. From the peripheral appearance of Onqelos and Yonatan in the third of these four traditions they do not appear to carry much topical weight.

It is a commonplace to consider strings of loosely connected traditions as largely irrelevant to the topic under discussion, a mere by-product of oral

¹⁷² For the reworking of earlier sources, see Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 169–73.

¹⁷³ On the Cairo Genizah fragments, see Brody and Wiesenbergs, *Post-Talmudic Rabbinic Manuscripts* and especially Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*, whose collation is cited in case of additional Genizah fragments (under his sigla, p. ה).

tradition in its current co-text.¹⁷⁴ There is perhaps something irresistible in the assumption that some oral traditions were thrown in, in order to preserve them, or as an associative digression. Nonetheless, it is worth exploring the possibility that these additional traditions are an integral part of the *sugya* rather than stranded notes.¹⁷⁵ The four traditions attributed to either R. Yirmeya or R. Ḥiyya b. Abba, who were active in Palestine in the third and fourth generation of Amoraim (the first half of the fourth century CE), seem to have been transmitted en bloc in Babylon;¹⁷⁶ the stereotypical introduction suggests as much.¹⁷⁷ The existence of parallels for these traditions within the Bavli as well as elsewhere—with the exception of the Targum tradition, which has partial parallels outside the Bavli—allows us to evaluate their editorial features, and in particular the possibility that these four traditions were raised at this particular point in response to the drift of the argument.

Following my initial discussion of the structure of the *gemara*, I shall analyse the four traditions mentioned and their parallels, as well as their setting in the *gemara*. I will argue that however isolated this single occurrence in b. Meg. 3a may be, the mention of both Targums is neither casual nor anecdotal, but plays an undervalued part in the *gemara* on m. Meg. 1.1 (b. Meg. 2a–5a).

The Mishna opens with a list of days on which the scroll of Esther should be read (1.1), the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th or 15th of Adar, depending on the day of the week on which the 14th falls and whether the location is a village, large city, or a town surrounded by walls since the days of Joshua

¹⁷⁴ See, e.g., L. Jacobs, *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 46: “The linking of diverse topics solely because they have a common authorship is a frequent literary device in the Babylonian Talmud, and the attempts by commentators to find a linking theme in such instances is misguided.”

¹⁷⁵ A variant reading in Lon400 (agreeing with Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*, p. 103, MSS ש 6 ג 10 10 ג 31) introduce the four traditions with the following mnemonic note: חמתן צופים תרגום: חג' סימ' ספר, corresponding to the first words of each of these traditions. Rabbinovicz, *ספר דקדוקי סופרים*, VIII, p. 3 n. 1 erroneously reads בנס for צופים.

¹⁷⁶ Which does not imply that they were transmitted en bloc from Palestine to Babylon in their present form, which appears to be of Babylonian coinage; more on this below.

¹⁷⁷ Originally, the tradition may have been transmitted by Yirmeya in the name of R. Ḥiyya b. Abba; cf. b. Meg. 4a; b. Ber. 13b. So Weiss, *על היצירה הספרותית*, p. 206 n. 96. For the first tradition, also contrast y. Meg. 1.1, 70a (see below).

ben Nun (1.2). It then discusses how to define a village or a large city, and under which circumstances the date of Purim is shifted (1.3).¹⁷⁸

The Bavli first dwells at length on the biblical sources relating to the dates, then continues with an examination in similar detail of the law for cities that were surrounded by a wall in the days of Joshua ben Nun. The question is how to justify the distinctions between cities and villages in the Mishna, and how to apply these to contemporary localities. The debate centres on which localities belong to the category of cities that were walled in the days of Joshua ben Nun, and their boundaries, citing Est. 9.28. Embedded in this discussion about the limits of a city following the first of eight statements attributed to R. Yehoshua b. Levi, we find the four traditions introduced by the words ‘Yirmeya, and it was said [alternatively] R. Hiyya b. Abba, said...’. Immediately after the fourth, the proof-text Est. 9.28 is taken up again, triggering a discussion of priorities (3a–b): Temple service versus reading Esther; Tora study versus reading Esther; individual and communal reading, and, finally, tending to an unattended corpse versus reading Esther. This is followed by a repetition of R. Yehoshua b. Levi’s first statement and seven additional traditions attributed to him: ‘[Back to the statement] itself’ (גופה):¹⁷⁹ R. Yehoshua b. Levi said, A city and all that adjoins it and all that is taken in by the eye with it is reckoned as a walled city’. The eighth tradition concludes this aspect of the Mishna, and the *gemara* proceeds to the shifting dates for villages.

That is the linear description. However, interrelationships exist between the *gemara* and the four Yirmeya/Hiyya traditions. Introductory sugyot frequently possess unique features, which turn them into a framework for the subsequent sugya or sugyot.¹⁸⁰ Such stammaitic features are evident here too. The start of the *gemara* is marked by an immediate retraction from the initial (and sensible) question as to how the Mishna arrives at its

¹⁷⁸The distinction between the various terms for localities is often blurred; see Z. Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 17–103 (17–19). Cf. S. Applebaum, ‘Economic Life in Palestine’, in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (CRINT, 1.2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 641–45; Goodman, *State and Society*, pp. 27–31. Here it is assumed that the כרך represents a walled city, the עיר a large village, and the כפר a small village.

¹⁷⁹On this term, see Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie*, II, p. 26; Epstein, *מבוא לניסח*, pp. 244, 907–908 and the literature cited there.

¹⁸⁰Weiss, *על היצירה הספרותית*, pp. 8–11, 16; Cohen, *Rereading Talmud*, p. 164.

dates. These dates come as something of a surprise. The Book of Esther only specifies the 14th and 15th of Adar, and makes no mention of the 11th, 12th or 13th.¹⁸¹ The additional dates follow from the fact that in villages the reading of Esther is held on the market day. The Bavli opens as follows:

מגילה נקראת באחד עשר מנל מנל כדבעינן למימר לקמן חכמים הקילו על הכפרים
להיות מקדימין ליום הכניסה כדי שיספקו מים ומזון לאחיהם שבכרכים

From where [do we know that the Megilla is read] on the 11th?

From where?¹⁸²

As we will seek to state below,¹⁸³ the sages were lenient with the small villages [and allowed them] to advance [the day of reading] to the market day, so that they will provide water and food for their brothers in the walled cities [on the 14th of Adar].

This passage is remarkable for several reasons. The initial solution—that villagers may provide water and food to the cities on Purim—is proleptic, and only receives full treatment in ff. 4a–b and 19a¹⁸⁴ where, attributed to the first generation Palestinian Amora R. Ḥanina, this formulation of the solution is rejected, and slightly reformulated (4a–b),¹⁸⁵ although it agrees with *y. Meg. i.i, 7ob*. There is reason to assume that the proleptic reference is an editorial interjection. The phrase מנל usually introduces a biblical verse, or a *baraita*.¹⁸⁶ Before a direct answer is provided, this editorial insertion gives rise to a reformulation of the original question:

אנן הכי קאמרינן מכדי כולו אנשי כנסת הגדולה תקנינהו דאי סלקא דעתך אנשי
כנסת הגדולה ארבעה עשר וחמשה עשר תקון אתו רבנן ועקרי תקנתא דתקינן אנשי
כנסת הגדולה והתנן אין בית דין יכול לבטל דברי בית דין חבירו אלא אם כן גדול
ממנו בחכמה ובמנין

¹⁸¹The *gemara* identifies 'hints' as prooftexts for these additional dates further on.

¹⁸²The repetition of מנל is absent in ColX, Gött*, Mun140*.

¹⁸³At his point ColX adds: דאיתמר אמר ר' חנינה, a reference to b. Meg. 4a. It does not repeat the relevant clause of the mishna, עשר, מהאחד עשר.

¹⁸⁴Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, p. תסג. n. 1 suggests that whoever added these words here did not know R. Ḥanina's words, following the Tosafot. However, the point may well be different, namely to address the theme of authority, even if the statement used is to be qualified later on (somewhat akin to 'writing under erasure'). Cf. Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*, pp. 132–33.

¹⁸⁵It is accepted under special circumstances in b. Meg. 19a. In *y. Meg. i.i, 7ob* it is attributed to the Tanna R. Shmuel.

¹⁸⁶Cf. Halivni, *מיומא עד חגיגה*, p. תסג. The *מסורת הש"ס* refer to Tosefta Zeb. 89a. Cf. Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*, p. 131, who suggests editorial touches in b. Zev. 89a.

This is what we really mean to say: Now, all [dates] have been ordained by the Men of the Great Assembly. So, if you should think that they ordained the 14th and the 15th¹⁸⁷ but the rabbis came and revised the ordinance which the Men of the Great Synagogue instituted [by adding the additional dates], we have learned: One court cannot overrule the decisions of another court unless it is greater in wisdom and numbers.¹⁸⁸

At the very outset the *gemara* thus highlights the question of rabbinic authority, and reinterprets the question 'from where' to be a question about a hint in the scroll of Esther itself for the dates instituted by the Men of the Great Assembly. The text continues as follows:

אלא פשיטא כולו אנשי כנסת הגדולה תקינו היכא רמיזא

Obviously, however, all these [dates] must have been laid down by the Men of the Great Assembly, [so] where are they hinted at [in the Book of Esther]?

Following Rashi, the words *היכא רמיזא* ('where are they hinted at') are the answer to the initial question, *מנלן*. Neither the Mishna, nor the Tosefta or the Yerushalmi make this point about authority, and while the Yerushalmi refers to the same sources, it also explicitly refers to a contradictory opinion: 'R. Yose says, These are the dates which the sages established for them'.¹⁸⁹ The question of authority, and legitimate sources for halakhic decisions is taken up in the four traditions we are most concerned with here.

The first of the Yirmeya/Hiyya traditions is clearly relevant to the most immediate question, what counts as a city. There is no doubt that this tradition belongs here; its parallel in b. Pes. 46a is not exact, and has not been attributed to the same masters,¹⁹⁰ while its relevance is most notable at this junction (f. 2b):

¹⁸⁷ MS Lon400 supplements: לאו כולו תקון אלא.

¹⁸⁸ The quotation is from m. Edu. 1.5. The silent assumption is that the Men of the Great Synagogue were the ones who established the festival of Purim in the first place. For the quoted mishna, see also y. Shevi. 1.1, 33a; y. Shab. 1.4, 3d; y. A. Zar. 2.8, 41d; b. M. Qat. 3b; b. Git. 36b; b. A. Zar. 36a. Note, however, the commentary of Ritva at this point.

¹⁸⁹ y. Meg. 1.1, 69d–70a; cf. t. Meg. 1.1–4.

¹⁹⁰ Instead, 'R. Abbahu in the name of R. Simeon b. Laqish'. It concerns a similar reasoning about the distance between Tiberias and Midgdal Nunya as one mile. The distance between Ḥamthan and Tiberias is not mentioned elsewhere in classical rabbinic literature.

דאמר רבי יהושע בן לוי כרך וכל הסמוך לו וכל הנראה עמו נידון כדרך עד כמה אמר רבי ירמיה ואיתימא רבי חייא בר אבא כמחמתן לטבריא מיל¹⁹¹ ולימא מיל הא¹⁹² קא משמע לן דשיעורא דמיל כמה הוי כמחמתן לטבריא

For R. Yehoshua b. Levi said, A walled city and all that is near to it, and everything that can be seen with it, is considered a walled city. How far? Yirmeya said, or some say R. Hiyya b. Abba, As [the distance] from Ḥamthan to Tiberias, a mile. Then let him say a mile? (The matter is incidental,) to teach us that the standard of a mile is as [the distance] between Ḥamthan and Tiberias.

The discussion implies that Ḥamthan has the same status as Tiberias; as the alternative designation חמי טבריא ‘Ḥammē Tiverya’ indicates, the former was assigned the status of Tiberias in rabbinic literature.¹⁹³ The designation ‘From Ḥamthan to Tiberias, a mile’ is reminiscent of the distance indicated on a Roman milliarium (‘From Scythopolis until here a mile’), although the distance is normally counted from the main destination, here Tiberias, to the actual spot of the milestone. The formula may have been cited to consolidate the proximity of both places and the limits of identity between town and near-by settlement, as milestones—first attested in Palestine when the second legion was stationed in Judaea under Hadrian¹⁹⁴—were placed at distances of one mile along public roads.¹⁹⁵

However, a different explanation is more likely. The introduction of the ‘mile’ follows the preposition כ ‘as’ like a gloss on a comparison which was not unproblematic. The reason for the comparison appears from the parallel in the Yerushalmi (y. Meg. 1.1, 70a):

¹⁹¹In ColX, Muni40 and Ox23, מיל for והיינו מיל.

¹⁹²In Gött מילתא אגב אורחיה, a hermeneutic reflection on the proof that often precedes קא משמע לן, is attested.

¹⁹³Cf. t. Eruv. 5(7).2 (עיר אחת); y. Eruv. 05.1, 22d@5.1, 22d; y. Meg. 1.1, 70a; b. Meg. 5b–6a. See further G. Reeg, *Die Ortsnamen Israels nach der rabbinischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1989), pp. 254–55, 256. Archaeologically, the two places are distinct; see G. Foerster, ‘Tiberias’, in M. Avi-Yonah and E. Stern, *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1975), vol. 4, pp. 1173–76; cf. Lieberman, תוספתא כפשוטה, III, p. 387.

¹⁹⁴B.H. Isaac, *The Near East Under Roman Rule: Selected Papers* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), p. 60.

¹⁹⁵For the milestones, see B.H. Isaac and I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea*, 1. *The Legio-Scythopolis Road* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1982); M. Fischer, B.H. Isaac and I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea*, II. *Jaffa–Jerusalem Roads* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1996).

ר' אייבו בר נגרי בשם ר' חייא בר בא כגון הדא חמתה לא אמ' אלא כגון הא חמתה
עצמה מוקפת חומה מימות יהושע בן נון

R. Aybo b. Naggari in the name of R. Ḥiyya b. Ba, As Ḥamtha for example. He only said 'for example' because Ḥamtha itself had been walled since the days of Joshua ben Nun.

This tradition relates to the Bavli with one identical and one different tradent on the one hand, and the comparison with Ḥamthan on the other. Its wording does not refer to 'a mile' but explains Ḥamthan as an example because the rule did not apply: walled since the days of Joshua, Ḥamthan counted of itself among the likes of Tiberias. So why mention it among the places that are included by virtue of their proximity to a walled town? Presumably, the Yerushalmi harmonizes two distinct traditions, one of which did not recognize Ḥamthan's status as a walled city of the early days. Be this as it may, the Bavli further explains the exemplary status of Ḥamthan in terms of a model distance, possibly known by virtue of the milestones.

R. Yehoshua b. Levi's statement is a *baraita* in t. Meg. 1.1 and y. Meg. 1.1, 70a, while a further refinement of this opinion in b. Meg. 3b is introduced with the word *תנא*, as noted by Albeck; R. Yehoshua b. Levi, of the first generation of Palestinian Amoraim, was considered a *Tanna*.¹⁹⁶ In b. Meg. 3b the geographical and visual proximity are distinguished as separate criteria, unlike the impression given in the *Tosefta* and Yerushalmi.¹⁹⁷ The Yerushalmi cites Josh. 19.35 which lists Ḥammetha (=Ḥamthan) among a number of fortified cities, but the Bavli derives its proof from the previous proof-text ('family and family, province and province, city and city', Est. 9.28): 'the verse serves another teaching', namely, the duplication of terms serves to make this additional point about walled cities and places surrounding it (cf. Rashi). Thus not only has the case of Ḥamthan been justified, but every other similar instance as well; neither the Yerushalmi nor the *Tosefta* offer a biblical source in this connection. This first of four traditions attributed to R. Yirmeya or R. Ḥiyya b. Abba thus appears to elaborate on a Palestinian *memra*,¹⁹⁸ and it supplies a proof-text for the opinion which is lacking elsewhere.

¹⁹⁶ Albeck, *תוספתא*, pp. 55, 112; Epstein, *מבוא לנוסח המשנה*, pp. 236–37.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה*, v, p. 1123.

¹⁹⁸ A statement attributed to an Amora. Note that *ואיתימא* is Babylonian Aramaic, suggesting that the traditions underwent editing in Babylonian circles.

The issue of authority stated so explicitly at the outset of our sugya is taken up in the second of the four Yirmeya/Ḥiyya traditions, according to which the distinct forms of five Hebrew letters when concluding a word were instituted by the prophets:

ואמר רבי ירמיה ואיתימא רבי חייא בר אבא מנצפ"ך צופים אמרום ותסברא והכתיב אלה המצות שאין נביא רשאי לחדש דבר מעתה ועוד האמר רב חסדא מ"ם וסמ"ך שבלוחות בנס היו עומדין אין מהוה הוּוּ ולא הוּו ידעי הי באמצע תיבה והי בסוף תיבה ואתו צופים ותקינן פתוחין באמצע תיבה וסתומין בסוף תיבה סוף סוף אלה המצות שאין נביא עתיד לחדש דבר מעתה אלא שכחום וחזרו ויסדום

And Yirmeya said, or some say R. Ḥiyya b. Abba, [the final form of] mem nun ṣade pe kaph, the prophets [litt. 'seers'] instituted them.¹⁹⁹

Do you really think this?²⁰⁰

Is it not written, 'These are the commandments' (Lev. 27:34), so that no prophet has the authority to do something new from now on?²⁰¹

Moreover,²⁰² R. Ḥisda in fact said, The mem and samekh on the tablets [of the covenant] stood by a miracle.²⁰³

Yes, [both forms of the letters] did exist [in Moses' days] but they did not know which one stood in the middle of the word and which one at the end of a word. Then the prophets came and established the open forms in the middle of the word and the closed ones at the end of the word.

But in the final analysis, 'these are the commandments' (Lev. 27:34), so that no

¹⁹⁹This statement also occurs in Gen. R. 1.11(10) with a different attribution: 'R. Simon said in the name of R. Yehoshua b. Levi: mem nun ṣade pe kaph are a Mosaic halakha from Sinai. Yirmeya said in the name of R. Ḥiyya b. Abba: They are what the Seers instituted'; Num. R. 18.21 and Tan. קרח 2: 'The letters mem nun ṣade pe kaph have double forms, and were instituted by the prophets'.

²⁰⁰After ותסברא a plus follows in three mss; ColX: צופים ולא משה; Gött: צופים אמרום; Ox23: משה; ולא משה. I.e., is it not a law from Sinai?

²⁰¹This argument can also be found in Sifra בחקתי 13.7; Ruth R. 4.5; b. Yom. 80a; b. Tem. 16a.

²⁰²This whole argument of R. Ḥisda is absent in ColX*, Segal's mss נג 36 19 10 33 נ ע 16; Segal, מסורות הנוסח, pp. 142–44.

²⁰³They are held to have cut through the stone, meaning that these two letters would have cut their inner sections out; however, by a miracle they were left hanging in mid-air. This only applies to the final form of the letter mem, which therefore must have existed at the time of the giving of Tora. D. Börner-Klein and E. Hollender, *Rabbinische Kommentare zum Buch Esther* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000) take it as a reference to the similarity of these letters, which could only be distinguished by a miracle, but as a miracle this is far-fetched, and it does not agree with the Yerushalmi tradition cited below or with a second tradition attributed to R. Ḥisda in b. Shab. 104a, which claims that the letters could be read from both sides of the tablets. See, however, p. 485 n. 212 below.

prophet can institute anything new from now on.

Rather, [these forms existed at that time but] they forgot them and the prophets reestablished them.²⁰⁴

Some manuscripts highlight the issue of authority with the additional words: 'The prophets [instituted these letters], and not Moses?'²⁰⁵ This claim is rejected, for 'no prophet has the authority to institute anything new'; 'these are the commandments' (Lev. 27.34), in this precise form. In addition a tradition attributed to R. Ḥisda is cited, based on the letter *mem* already having its final form at Mount Sinai. The whole block is relevant to the discussion in b. Shab. 104a,²⁰⁶ which reproduces the whole passage almost verbatim,²⁰⁷ for two reasons: its co-text deals with the form of letters, unlike Meg. 3a, and the repetition of the proof-text, that a prophet has no authority to innovate on matters laid down in the Tora makes an additional point in Shab. 104a (namely, that the open and closed forms of the *mem* are of equal sanctity) whereas it merely repeats something in Meg. 3a: that both forms existed at the time of the giving of the Tora, and that the prophets re-established them.

Which of these passages came first? Arguably, neither; they are both adapted to their immediate co-text. The statement attributed to Ḥisda in b. Meg. is absent in ColX* and many Geniza fragments,²⁰⁸ and there is reason to assume that this absence is originally based on a crucial difference between the two passages. In b. Shab. 104a the co-text suggests that the Seers instituted the regular rather than the final form of these letters, whereas in Meg. the co-text suggests that they instituted the final forms. In both cases, the statement attributed to Yirmeya or R. Ḥiyya bar Abba itself leaves the question open, so that it is the elaborated form of the tradition which creates the contrast. Without R. Ḥisda's statement in b. Meg. 2b–3a, both passages may refer to the institution of the regular forms of these

²⁰⁴This statement has a parallel in y. Suk. 4.1, 54b; y. Shab. 1.4, 3d; y. Shevi. 1.5, 33b; y. Pea 1.1, 15b; y. Pea 2.4, 17a; y. Ket. 8.11, 32c; b. Meg. 18a; b. Shab. 104a; b. Yom. 80a; b. Suk. 44a.

²⁰⁵See p. 483 n. 200 above.

²⁰⁶In b. Yom. 80a the same proof-text and its inference are applied to a different case.

²⁰⁷It combines the same attribution, the statement on the final letters, the miracle, the proof-text, and infers the same conclusion including the impossibility of innovation, but bases it all on R. Ḥisda's statement.

²⁰⁸See p. 483 n. 202 above.

letters.²⁰⁹ Whereas in Shab. 104a one relevant element of the Yirmeya or R. Ḥiyya b. Abba traditions was added later on, in Meg. 3a the whole block was transmitted since the focus here includes a theme that runs through all of them.

Apart from b. Shab. 104a, all other parallels are only partial. The final statement is typical for the Yerushalmi: 'but they forgot them and [the prophets] reestablished them'. The two other Babylonian passages which carry this argument, b. Yom. 80a and b. Suk. 44a, likewise reflect Palestinian traditions. Since the sages cited here are Palestinian as well, it appears that the core components of this tradition are of Palestinian provenance, although the present form has a composite character, which points to a Babylonian reshaping of these traditions. Moreover, the parallel in Gen. R. 11.10 simply juxtaposes the view that the form of the letters goes back to Sinai with the opinion that the prophets instituted the distinction between the letter-forms,²¹⁰ and it does not claim that the prophets re-established a forgotten tradition.

The Yerushalmi (y. Meg. 1.11[8], 71c) offers an instructive parallel: according to those who claim that the Tora was given in Ashurit script, the letter *samekh* is a miracle (as it is closed);²¹¹ according to those who claim it was given in palaeo-Hebrew, the *ayin* (which is closed according to this script) is a miracle. And it continues: 'Yirmeya in the name of R. Ḥiyya b. Ba and R. Simon both say: In the Tora of the earlier ones (הראשונים) neither the he nor the mem was closed; just the *samekh* was closed'.²¹² This discussion relates to later innovation in writing, without betraying any sensitivity to such innovation, even though the latter statement is attributed to the same rabbis as in the Bavli (with confusion as to who authored it). This difference indicates that the second Yirmeya/Ḥiyya-tradition underwent a development in Babylonian circles. All the emphasis in the Bavli is on the authority to innovate, which is interesting, since the emphasis appears to belong to the *stam*.

The third Yirmeya/Ḥiyya tradition is as follows (Meg. 3a):

²⁰⁹ Segal, *מסורות הנוסח*, pp. 142–44. Note also that R. Ḥisda's statement is taken up again in b. Shab. 104a with *גופא*.

²¹⁰ See p. 483 n. 199 above.

²¹¹ See p. 483 n. 203 above.

²¹² A closed he is like a *het*; these letters were often exchanged.

ואמר רבי ירמיה ואיתימא רבי חייא בר אבא תרגום של תורה אונקלוס הגר אמרו מפי רבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע תרגום של נביאים יונתן בן עוזיאל אמרו מפי חגי זכריה ומלאכי ונודעזעה ארץ ישראל ארבע מאות פרסה על ארבע מאות פרסה יצתה בת קול ואמרה מי הוא זה שגילה סתריי לבני אדם עמד יונתן בן עוזיאל על רגליו ואמר אני הוא שגילתי סתריך לבני אדם גלוי וידוע לפניך שלא לכבודי עשיתי ולא לכבוד בית אבא אלא לכבודך עשיתי שלא ירבו מחלוקת בישראל ועוד ביקש לגלות תרגום של כתובים יצתה בת קול ואמרה לו דיין מאי טעמא משום דאית ביה קץ משיח ותרגום של תורה אונקלוס הגר אמרו והא אמר רב איקא בר אבין אמר רב חננאל אמר רב מאי דכתיב ויקראו בספר תורת האלהים מפרש ושום שכל ויבינו במקרא ויקראו בספר תורת האלהים זה מקרא מפרש זה תרגום ושום שכל אלו הפסוקין ויבינו במקרא אלו פיסקי טעמים ואמרי לה אלו המסורת שכחום וחזרו ויסדום מאי שנא דאורייתא דלא אזדעזעה ואדנביאי אזדעזעה דאורייתא מיפרשא מלתא דנביאי איכא מילי דמיפרשן ואיכא מילי דמסתמן דכתיב ביום ההוא יגדל המספד בירושלם כמספד הדדרמון בבקעת מגדון ואמר רב יוסף אלמלא תרגומא דהאי קרא לא ידענא מאי קאמר ביומא ההוא יסגי מספדא בירושלים כמספדא דאחאב בר עמרי דקטל יתיה הדדרמון בן טבריימון ברמות גלעד וכמספדא דיאשיה בר אמון דקטל יתיה פרעה חגירא בבקעת מגידו

[1] And Rabbi Yirmeya said, or some say Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba, The translation of the Tora, Onqelos the Proselyte said it from the mouth of R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua.²¹³

[2] The translation of the Prophets, Yonatan b. Uzziel, was said from the mouth of Haggai, Zecharya and Malachi.

[3] On that hour²¹⁴ the land of Israel was shaken four hundred parasangs by four hundred parasangs.²¹⁵ A whisper (בת קול) went out and said, Who is the one who revealed my secrets to mankind? Yonatan ben Uzziel arose and said, It is I who have revealed your secrets to mankind. It is fully known to you²¹⁶ that I have not done this for my own honour or for the honour of my father's house, but for your honour I have done it, that dissension may not increase in Israel.²¹⁷

²¹³MSS Ox23, Muni40^m add: באותה שעה בא חשך לעולם שלשים ימים. This is not an original reading (cf. [9] which reveals a lack of knowledge about it), but reflects later speculation on, interestingly, Greek translations of the Tora. The passage has a parallel in y. Meg. i.11(8), 71c.

²¹⁴MSS ColX, Gött, Lon400, Muni40, Ox23 and Vat134 contain the plus באותו שעה (shared by ג3 ג6 ג10 ג53 נ פ ה Segal, מסורות הנוסח, p. 35); Mun95: באותא שניה.

²¹⁵See also b. Sot. 49b; b. B. Qam. 82b; b. Men. 64b.

²¹⁶For the words גלוי וידוע לפניך שלא, ColX, Mun95 read ולא (in agreement with ג11 ג12 ע ה Segal, מסורות הנוסח, p. 35); Gött לא.

²¹⁷Yonatan's words are echoed in b. B. Meṣ. 59b; ARN A 6 (32). In the latter source, the final (and crucial) motivation is completely different.

[4] And he further sought to reveal the Targum of the Writings. A whisper went out and said to him: Enough for you!

[5] What was the reason? Because the date of the Messiah is in it.

[6] But did Onqelos the Proselyte say the translation of the Tora?

[7] Did not Rav Iqa b. Avin say, Rav Ḥananel said, Rav said, What [does it mean] when it is written, 'And they read in the book, the law of God, clearly, giving the sense, so they understood the reading' (Neh. 8.8).

'And they read in the scroll, the law of God', this is Miqra [Hebrew text]; 'clearly', this is the Targum; 'giving the sense', these are the verses; 'so they understood the reading', these are the intonations, or some say, the traditions.²¹⁸

[8] Rather,²¹⁹ they had forgotten them and now established them again.

[9] What is the difference that it was not shaken because of the Law but for the Prophets that it was shaken? Because the Law has been expressed clearly, the case of the Prophets has clearly defined words here and unqualified words there, as it is written, 'In that day the wailing in Jerusalem shall be as great as the wailing at Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddon' (Zech. 12.11).

[10] And Rav Yoseph said,²²⁰ If not for the Targum of this verse, we would not know what it really says: 'And on that day the wailing in Jerusalem will be great as the wailing for Ahab son of Omri whom Hadad-rimmon son of Tabrimmon had killed in Ramoth Gilead, and like the wailing for Josiah son of Amon whom Pharaoh the Lame had killed in the plain of Megiddon'.

This whole block, for convenience divided into ten parts, has no parallel in the Bavli itself and has been developed much further than any of the other Yirmeya/Ḥiyya traditions. The first part [1] has a parallel in the Yerushalmi, while [2], [3] and [4] are unique. [1] applies to Onqelos what was applied to Aquila and his Greek recension in *y. Meg.* 1.11(8), 71c; the language of translation intended here is ambiguous. The Aramaic translation of the Tora has become known as Targum Onqelos on the basis of this saying alone, but there is no co-textual confirmation that Aramaic is implied. This saying is mirrored in [2], which may or may not reflect a (Palestinian) tradition about Θεοδοσίωv (= ייתר),²²¹ and which is just as ambiguous about the language of translation, although in this case [10] suggests that it was eventually interpreted as the Aramaic translation now known as Targum

²¹⁸ On [7], see also *Gen. R.* 36.8; *y. Meg.* 4.1, 74d; *b. Ned.* 37b and below.

²¹⁹ All mss read אלה (ColX, Gött, Lon400, Mun140, Mun95, Ox23, Vat134).

²²⁰ See Gordon, *Studies in the Targum*, pp. 55–56.

²²¹ P. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (2nd edn, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), pp. 195–96; D. Barthélemy, *Les dévanciers*, p. 90.

Jonathan.²²² This latter interpretation does not necessarily apply to the tradition of Yirmeya/R. Ḥiyya b. Abba, because [10] is obviously a later (and Babylonian) supplement to the tradition.

Together these four Hebrew statements form a distinct unity, with [1] and [2] attributing the translations of Tora and Prophets to established authorities, while [3] addresses the impact of the ‘publication’ of [2], and [4] provides the reason why no authorized translation of the Writings was created. The Aramaic gloss of [5] then explains the prohibition against translating the Writings with a reference to its contents. Whether [3] and [4] belong to the original tradition, remains unclear. They reflect the question whether anything other than the Tora may be translated, in contrast to the Yerushalmi’s parallel to [1], which focuses on the language of translation, draws the conclusion that only Greek is appropriate, and finally praises Aquila’s Greek version.²²³ It seems likely that [2]-[4] are a distinct development of the tradition of [1], but one which may well antedate the final redaction of the Talmud. The silence regarding the language of translation in the Bavli allows the possibility that the saying applies to Aramaic, as evidenced by [10] and the later reception of this passage.

More significantly, in common with both the opening of the *gemara* and the previous Yirmeya/Ḥiyya tradition, the next comment [6] shares a concern regarding the authority to innovate: ‘But did Onqelos the proselyte say the translation of the Tora?’ Obviously not [7]; rather, the institution of translation is attributed to Ezra,²²⁴ based on the verse of Neh. 8.8. This refutation, which has a parallel in Gen. R. 36.8 referring to a Greek translation,²²⁵ is followed by an exact parallel with the second

²²² A variant reading in [10] refers explicitly to Targum Jonathan: קאמ' דתרגום יונתן בן קאמ' (Mun95, introducing Zech. 12.11-12).

²²³ y. Meg. 1.11(8), 71c.

²²⁴ The Ezra connection also occurs in y. Meg. 4.1, 74d, attributed to ‘Rav Zeira said in the name of R. Ḥananel’, in the co-text of oral Aramaic Bible translation. These were Babylonian Amoraim. In b. Ned. 37b, where the language is not obvious, the attribution is only slightly different: ‘R. Iqā b. Avin said, Rav Ḥananel said, Rav said’.

²²⁵ A. van der Kooij, ‘Nehemiah 8:8 and the Question of the “Targum”- Tradition’, in: G.J. Norton and S. Pisano (eds.), *Tradition of the Text: Studies Offered to Dominique Barthélemy in Celebration of his 70th Birthday* (OBO, 109; Freiburg & Göttingen, 1991), pp. 79–90.

Yirmeya/Ḥiyya tradition: 'They had forgotten them and now established them again' [8].²²⁶

The emphasis on the traditional basis of the oral-performative translation in [6–8] indicates that the Yirmeya/Ḥiyya b. Abba tradition was included not only for the sake of memorization and preservation, but also followed the drift of the argument. While the basic tradition attributed to Yirmeya or Ḥiyya b. Abba may have been included because it was part of a block of such traditions, later generations who discussed these traditions in the *sugya* emphasized and developed aspects of authority. The very attribution to Onqelos is called into question as it might undermine the translation's validity [6–8]. As a result, the Palestinian traditions are markedly different in the Babylonian version. Quite apart from loosening the connection to the Greek language, they no longer include the praise for the (Aramaic) translation which the Yerushalmi bestowed on Aquila's work and refer to oral rather than written translations.²²⁷

The final comments [9–10] probe the significance of [2]–[4], asking why the land did not shake for Onqelos' translation. The editor's explanation [9], that the Tora is less enigmatic than the Prophets, points to a scale of revelation starting at the bottom with the plain Tora, followed by the arcane Prophets (and presumably topped by the Writings which should not be translated at all since these contain a prophecy about the messianic era [4]). Interestingly, the illustration of the Prophets' recondite materials in [10] concerns a passage, Zech. 12.11–12, which at first sight may not contain revelations shocking enough to shake the earth, but was nevertheless the source of serious speculation since some believed it referred to the Messiah son of Joseph.²²⁸

[10] also occurs in b. M. Qat. 28b, where it is one of a series of consolations offered to R. Ishmael—even if it is hardly original there. Rav Yoseph's comment certainly was not made to R. Ishmael, and seems to be inserted in the series of four Tannaitic consolations to explain R. Aqiva's

²²⁶The same phrase occurs in b. Shab. 104a, the parallel to our second Yirmeya/R. Ḥiyya tradition, also stammaitic; see further p. 484 n. 204 above.

²²⁷In [1], [2] and [6] the word *אמר* implies an oral translation. In the Yerushalmi, the context (Mishna Meg. 1.8) is the writing of the Tora in other languages. The verb *תרגום* applied to Aquila does not imply an oral translation in the Yerushalmi; see Ch. Five.

²²⁸See b. Suk. 52a. TgJon's translation identifies both an exemplary and a non-exemplary king in this verse, Josiah and Ahab; the *gemara* discusses the Messiah ben Joseph and the evil inclination.

quotation of Zech. 12.11. Likewise, the translation attributed to Rav Yoseph hardly originates in Megilla, given that it does not explain what was so disturbing about the passage. It therefore seems to be an independent comment on the biblical verse, added in an attempt to clarify the obscure reference to Zechariah.

Elements [6–10] were added to the Yirmeya/R. Hiyya b. Abba tradition in Babylon as a result of the attribution to Babylonian sages in [7] and [10]. This development suggests that later generations developed certain aspects of the Yirmeya/Hiyya traditions.

It is worth considering the first justification of Targum Jonathan in closer detail [3]. This passage reflects a well-wrought compromise between opponents and advocates of translation. The structure of the argument is as follows:

1. Yonatan composed under prophetic guidance.
2. Heaven and earth are shocked at his revelation of divine secrets.
3. Yonatan addresses the objections with a plea for unity.

The first and last points neutralize the horror of the revelation of divine secrets in a translation. In fact, the tendency here is to abhor translations, and only the long-standing Greek translation of the Tora, which had been sanctified in Scripture by virtue of Neh. 8.8, could not be undone. The translation of the Prophets was virtually forced on heaven, whereas that of the Writings would not be allowed.

The revelation of God's secrets to humankind is reminiscent of the Christian claim to an oral tradition reaching back to Moses, which informed the translation of the Septuagint.²²⁹ As Marc Bregman pointed out, the Christian claim of this secret, esoteric tradition as expressed by Bishop Hilary of Poitiers (4th century CE) is mirrored in a passage found in the *Pesiqta Rabbati*,²³⁰ where the Mishna (in the wider sense of oral tradition) is called a *mysterium* which should not be committed to writing, lest it also be translated.²³¹ It is not implausible that Theodotion's Greek translation raised similar concerns of a polemical nature; the form of address in our

²²⁹ See esp. Bregman, 'Mishnah and LXX'; cf. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, pp. 144–46.

²³⁰ For parallels, see p. 228 n. 25 above. On Hilary's claim, see his *Tractatus super Psalmos* 2.2–3. Bregman, 'Mishnah and LXX', pp. 340–41, cautions against the assumption that 'one of them must necessarily have been aware of the other's position'; rather, 'they belong to the same realm of polemical discourse'.

²³¹ See pp. 228–31 above.

passage (לבני אדם) is inclusive and might therefore include non-Jewish use of these secrets. If so, the passage originally focused on a written translation. But the similarities should not perhaps be carried too far. No explicit mention is made of a rival faith in b. Meg. 3a; rather, reference is made to the problem of 'dissension in Israel'.²³² While polemical concerns may have played a part in the original formulation of this tradition, as it stands now the text deals more directly with the privileged position of the Hebrew Bible vis à vis its translations.

To appreciate the need for justification implicit in Yonatan's words, we should turn to the episode of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus' excommunication in b. B. Meṣ. 59b. R. Eliezer refused to comply with the majority rule, citing the conservative maxim that he never issued any new decree but only transmitted the traditions he had received from his ancestors.²³³ The following story in b. B. Meṣ. 59b refers to his eventual excommunication:

תנא אך גדול היה באותו היום שבכל מקום שנתן בו עיניו רבי אליעזר נשרף ואף רבן גמליאל היה בא בספינה עמד עליו נחשול לטבעו אמר כמדומה לי שאין זה אלא בשביל רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס עמד על רגליו ואמר רבונו של עולם גלוי וידוע לפניך שלא לכבודי עשיתי ולא לכבוד בית אבא עשיתי אלא לכבודך שלא ירבו מחלוקות בישראל It was taught [in a *baraita*], A great blow occurred on that day, for every place on which R. Eliezer set his eyes burnt down. And even Rabban Gamaliel, when he came in a boat, was threatened by a gale to the point of drowning. He said, it seems that this occurs only because of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. He rose to his feet and said, Master of the Universe, It is revealed and known before you that I did not do this for my own glory, or for the glory of my parental house, but for your glory, so that disagreement may not spread in Israel.²³⁴

The very same words attributed to Yonatan in his defence of his 'innovation' in [2] above are used here to justify the excommunication of a traditionalist who would not accept any innovation, with the same explicit reference to the rise of disagreement among the Tannaim themselves.

²³²On the relationship between סתריי (Meg.) and (Pes. R.) מסטירין, see Petuchowski, 'Judaism as Mystery', p. 145; Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, pp. 121–23.

²³³For that reason he was compared to a cistern that does not lose a drop, an immaculate bearer of tradition. Inevitably, his traditionalist stance was bound to clash with the principle of voting, irrespective of the credible pedigree of his own traditions.

²³⁴Cf. t. Ḥag. 2.9: 'R. Yossi said, Originally, there was no disagreement in Israel... but when those disciples of Shammai and Hillel who had not attended [upon their masters] sufficiently began to increase, disputes multiplied in Israel, and the Tora became as two Torah'. The last clause only appears in ms Vienna.

In this narrative, Gamaliel eventually pays with his life for wronging R. Eliezer. In the light of such significant tension between heritage and innovation, the co-text of the Bavli in Meg. 3a assumes more relevance. Not only is the whole discussion on the Targums framed by two repetitions of the brief concluding statement, שְׂכַחוּם וַיִּסְדִּימוּ, '(Rather,) they had forgotten them and reinstituted them', but the traditions themselves are linked to the opening of the *gemara* on the issue of authority to innovate, and serious reasons would have to be given to rationalize any innovation. Tensions such as these between tradition and innovation in the realm of *halakha* have long been noted in rabbinic literature.²³⁵ While the nature of the differences which prompted Yonatan to 'say' his translation are not revealed [3], the general setting of the tension and the halakhic context of the disagreements in its parallel passages noted above suggest a halakhic background for Yonatan's rationale as well. Nonetheless, it seems that the focus of the tradition is on the halakhic basis of translation as a practice.

As for the translation of the Writings, it is not entirely irrelevant that the permissibility of such activity is addressed in the opening chapter of Megilla. It seems that translations of Esther had always been highly popular but disparaged by the rabbis. According to a *baraita* further on in the tractate (b. Meg. 21b), the Book of Esther was so popular that up to ten people were allowed to interpret the Book during the service; even the resulting chaos would not prevent people from listening carefully.²³⁶ By Geonic times, R. Hai Gaon mentions the existence of lay translations of Esther, which vary widely and have not been authorized.²³⁷ And while not specifically addressing Esther, Sar Shalom (ninth century CE)—who is

²³⁵R. Goldenberg, 'The Problem of Originality in Talmudic Thought', in J. Neusner et al. (eds.), *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding. Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), II, pp. 19–27; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, pp. 65–83, 140–46; M. Fisch, *Rational Rabbis: Science and Talmudic Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Cf. L. Jacobs, *The Talmudic Argument: A Study in Talmudic Reasoning and Methodology* (New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 5–8.

²³⁶As noted above, p. 183 n. 51, Rashi omits the translation by ten people (as in the parallel in b. R. Hash. 27a); here, the absence of a written translation is taken to imply the impossibility of interpreting orally. Interestingly, the last phrase in the Bavli וְהָלַל וּבְהָלַל, called the *סיפא* in the parallel in b. R. Hash. 27a (without the oral translation by ten people), is absent in t. Meg. 3.20 and y. Meg. 4.1, 74d which may suggest that is not part of the *baraita*, but a later gloss.

²³⁷Lewin, *הגאונים*, 5.5.

the second source after b. Meg. 3a to attribute the Targum of the Tora to Onqelos—distinguishes authorized and non-authorized translations:²³⁸

שאר תרגומים אין בהם קדושה כתרגום הזה ושמענו מפי חכמים קדמונים שענין גדול עשה הקב"ה באונקלוס הגר על שנעשה התרגום על ידו

The rest of the Targumim do not have the same sanctity as this. We have heard from the earlier sages that the Holy One blessed be He has done a great thing with Onqelos the proselyte, because the Targum was made by him.²³⁹

The prohibition against publishing a translation of the Writings at this junction carries more weight than an anecdote recalled for mere mnemonic purposes. The fourth Yirmeya/Ḥiyya tradition—without a parallel outside the Bavli (except Yalq. S.)—begins with an abrupt change of subject, a quotation from Dan. 10.7:

וראיתי אני דניאל לבדי את המראה והאנשים אשר היו עמי לא ראו את המראה אבל חרדה גדלה נפלה עליהם ויברחו בהחבא מאן נינהו אנשים אמר רבי ירמיה ואיתימא רבי חייה בר אבא זה חגי זכריה ומלאכי אינהו עדיפי מיניה ואיהו עדיף מיניהו
'And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves' (Dan. 10.7).

Who were these men? Yirmeya, or some say R. Ḥiyya b. Abba, said: These were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. They were superior to him [in one way], and he was superior to them [in another].

The three prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi also made an appearance as the purported teachers of Yonatan, who were the safeguards of his 'translation'.²⁴⁰ The connection with the previous traditions, or even the sugya, is nonetheless far from a shallow association of names which takes the focus off the subject. The verse raises the question who is a greater figure of authority, Daniel or these prophets. While Daniel was not a prophet, things were revealed to him that remained hidden from them. Likewise Yonatan revealed aspects of meaning hidden from ordinary eyes, which others would not have seen without his intervention (as Rav Yoseph notes), and likewise Yonatan is associated with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi without being a prophet himself. While the parallel is not absolute, there is a marked similarity, even extending to the reaction of the surroundings to

²³⁸ Hebrew text quoted after Komlosh, המקרא באור התרגום, p. 33.

²³⁹ Quoted after McNamara, *The New Testament*, p. 57.

²⁴⁰ Daniel may have been alluded to in the prohibition to translate the Writings (see Rashi ad loc.).

the event: the earth shook, Daniel's companions trembled. Thus the fourth Yirmeya/Ḥiyya tradition supports the authority of Yonatan to introduce the previously unapproved innovation of a translation, by promoting him to a category almost on a par with the prophets themselves. The parallel in b. San. 93b–94a is instructive for the editorial form of the tradition. A link to the previous discussion, on why Nehemiah's book was not called after him,²⁴¹ introduces the same tradition quoted above, followed by the same elements which occur in b. Meg. 3a (quoted below):

וכי מאחר דלא חזו מאי טעמא איבעיתו אף על גב דאינהו לא חזו מזליהו חזו אמר רבינא שמע מינה האי מאן דמבעית אף על גב דאינהו לא חזי מזליה חזי מאי תקנתיה ליקרי קריאת שמע ואי קאים במקום הטנופת לינשוף מדוכתיה ארבע גרמידי ואי לא לימא הכי עיזא דבי טבחי שמינא מינאי

[1] But if they did not see, why were they frightened? Although they themselves did not see, their guardian angel saw.

[2] Said Ravina, We learn from this that if a man is frightened though he sees nothing, [the reason is that] his guardian angel sees.

[3] What is his remedy? He should recite the Shema. If he is in a place which is foul, he should move away from it four cubits. If he cannot do this, he should say this formula, 'The goat at the butchers is fatter than I am'.

This block is quite late. Ravina is either a sixth or eighth generation Babylonian Amora,²⁴² whose comment [2] on the fear of Daniel's companions is explained by an anonymous gloss [1], followed by instructions on how to behave in similar situations [3]. Since the whole block occurs in both places, it was probably part of a fixed tradition from the early fifth century CE at the earliest. Moreover, in [3] two Geniza fragments present the three prescribed performances as alternatives, without the conditions attached to the circumstances (a foul place; a foul place from which one cannot jump); these conditions were probably added much later.²⁴³ Palestinian statements and their accumulation of anonymous

²⁴¹'And whence do we know that Daniel was greater than he [Nehemiah]? From the verse...' The book of Nehemiah was also known by the name of 2 Ezra.

²⁴²There is no way to establish which one of the two is referred to here, since he is not debating with named contemporaries. This passage is not discussed in A. Cohen, רבינא (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2001).

²⁴³See E. Segal, 'לגלגוליו של נוסח בתלמוד הבבלי' ['The Goat of the Slaughterhouse...']—on the Evolution of a Variant Reading in the Babylonian Talmud], Tarbiz, 49 (1980), pp. 43–51.

comments by far outnumber Babylonian statements in the *gemara* so far. If we consider 'Rabba bar bar Ḥanna in the name of R. Yoḥanan b. Nappaḥa' as Palestinian, too, there are only a few instances of statements attributed to named Babylonian Amoraim²⁴⁴ before the block of eight statements by (the Palestinian Amora) R. Yehoshua b. Levi. Within this block, as noted above, we find the four statements of Yirmeya or (some say) R. Ḥiyya b. Abba. On the other hand, the parallels to these statements in the *Yerushalmi* do not have the same form, attribution or composition. They therefore appear to reflect a collection of *memrot*, transmitted from Palestine to Babylon,²⁴⁵ where they may have been reformulated and attracted further comments. The second tradition contains a statement by R. Ḥisda (which was added at a very late stage), the third by Rav Yoseph, and the fourth by Ravina (respectively third, third and sixth generation Babylonian Amoraim). In addition, the third tradition attributed to Yirmeya or Ḥiyya b. Abba contains the Nehemiah-verse, which is attributed to 'R. Iqa b. Avin in the name of R. Ḥananel who had it from Rav' (respectively third/fourth, second and first generation Babylonian Amoraim). Add to these supplementary discussions the anonymous material, and it becomes clear that we have here an essentially Babylonian version of a block of Palestinian traditions.

While the theme of authority may have been the thread running through these four traditions, even without the intervention of tradents and editor(s), the redacted form of the *gemara* articulates this aspect in a far more explicit way than the earlier layers of the *Bavli*, or the *Tosefta* and *Yerushalmi*. Although it is not implausible that the theme of 'forgetting and re-establishing' was a Palestinian element, this must have been added later since the parallels found in the *Yerushalmi* do not make it an issue at all in connection with these traditions. Elaborating this block of four traditions and linking them to the opening statement of the *sugya*, the *Bavli* frowns on any innovation unless a source can be cited, or special circumstances pertain (Yonatan/Daniel).

The programmatic value of b. Meg. 3a as an indication of the position of Targum in rabbinic discourse is invaluable. Translations are quoted

²⁴⁴Rabba bar bar Ḥanna (in the name of R. Yoḥanan, a Palestinian Amora [2a]), Rav Ashi and Rabba (2b), R. Ḥisda (late addition), R. Iqa b. Avin/R. Ḥananel/Rav and Ravina (3a).

²⁴⁵Cf. Y. Elman, *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonia* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1994), p. 27. See also E. Segal, *Case Citation in the Babylonian Talmud* (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 213–16.

either as biblically rooted institutions (TgOnq), or, more hesitantly, as valid innovations based on prophetic traditions (TgJon).²⁴⁶ That Yonatan became associated with the Targum must be related to older traditions about a Yonatan or Theodotion who composed a translation—in a move of transculturation from Hellenistic to Babylonian life—although it ultimately has to do with Yonatan's prestige, since he enjoyed great standing among the early Tannaim. In b. Suk. 28a a discussion of the *sukka* develops into a treatise on the master–pupil relationship, which mentions him as the greatest of Hillel's Elder's students, most notably in comparison to Yoḥanan b. Zakkay.²⁴⁷ However, his translation is not mentioned in Mishna, Tosefta or Yerushalmi, and even in the Bavli 'his' version is not cited under his name, but either associated with Rav Yoseph or marked with the introduction 'as we translate'.

In sum, the editors provided a foundation for the Targums they knew, and related them to the most trusted sources of authority, Ezra and the Prophets, who entrusted their teachings to Yonatan. To that end a block of Palestinian traditions was developed. These were originally transmitted together in their unelaborated form in Babylonian circles as statements made by either R. Yirmeya or R. Ḥiyya b. Abba, two sages who were born in Babylon but moved to Palestine as young men. It seems plausible that in this original form they were included in the *sugya*, although this cannot be claimed with certainty; a fifth tradition was not included,²⁴⁸ pointing to a process of selection either by earlier tradents or by the *stam* who developed the block even further. That the interest of the *stam* in translation reflects an older rabbinic interest, seems likely if we accept the four traditions, in their core form, as authentic. These Palestinian traditions also indicate that the real subject was Aquila, never the Aramaic version known as Onqelos. Nevertheless, the final form of the text with its allusion to the Aramaic

²⁴⁶As noted, there is no concrete use of the Targum for halakhic purposes here. Although Yonatan appears to refer to halakhic disagreements as the reason for his composition, it is more likely that the tradition focuses not on translation as a source of legal study but on the halakhic basis of translation as a practice.

²⁴⁷A catalogue of Yoḥanan's studies, which does not include translation, follows (except in Rab1608), which also occurs in b. B. Bat. 133b–134a. The same tradition occurs in y. Ned. 5:3, 9b.

²⁴⁸The fifth tradition, found in b. San. 7b, is embedded in a discussion about judges. Interestingly, this tradition also connects the authority of judges with a biblical verse ('These are the rules'), similar to the second tradition discussed here.

translation of Zechariah suggests that the translation of the Prophets was taken to refer to what is now known as Targum Jonathan, and it comes as no surprise that subsequent generations took Onqelos' version to be 'their' translation of the Tora.

9.6 Screening Aquila

Moving from one document to another, distinct roles instantly emerge when we sample the images that the rabbinic documents project of the famous convert of Roman extraction—the two constant elements, his non-Jewish origin and Roman background: from zealous convert, illustrious student, debater with Roman emperors, anxious convert, the Roman son of a colonist to the well-established translator who reinstated what is accepted tradition. The different and distinct images are reminiscent of previous studies that differentiated by document how traditions and protagonists were received.²⁴⁹ In this case, the findings reveal to what degree Aquila became the screen for contemporary and contextual projections of relationships between Jews and non-Jews. The person known as Aquila of Sinope in Christian patriarchal literature is clearly reminiscent of the protagonist by that name in rabbinic literature as the wealthy proselyte who translated the Scriptures, despite the differences which faltering memories and above all changing interests brought about.

The Tosefta is by far the most homogeneous of all documents in its portrait of the scrupulous convert who observes purity to the extreme and outdoes Rabban Gamaliel the Second. Each of the instances affirms his reputation, whereas his translational activities do not receive any mention whatsoever. He is a wealthy man, who employs his own cook and finds himself in the company of Jewish aristocracy. Unlike later texts, the Tosefta does not give any hint of an imperial connection.

In the Yerushalmi, Aquila is first and foremost a translator of the Tora into Greek, whose work (or translational activity if deemed purely oral-performative) is cited with approval, whether or not the actual citations agree with the fragments known to the Greek translation. There is evidence that additional layers of interpretation were woven around his transla-

²⁴⁹Cohen's suggestion of several stages in the tradition of the conversion of Antoninus comes to mind; Cohen, "The Conversion of Antoninus", pp. 168–71.

tions,²⁵⁰ sometimes with different takes on the scriptural lemma that is interpreted, all of which suggests that the tradition of Aquila remained in circulation and even under development within the circles of the rabbis—just as there is growing evidence that his work sparked off imitations and was subject to changes in the Greek manuscript tradition. Even if his work is not composed under the aegis of the rabbis, the two rabbis known to praise his work happen to be the leading rabbis of their generation, and their opinion is selected in a series of discussions of *m. Meg.* 1.8 which all endorse the use of Greek for Scripture, and their praise agrees with the fact that no one else in the *Yerushalmi* is cited for his translation quite like Aquila.

Beyond his value as a source of mostly lexical interpretations, his wit and piety are characteristics usefully deployed against the Roman emperor Hadrian—the anachronism probably should not encourage us to assume we have another Aquila the Proselyte at hand, as historical accuracy involves a concept of time that was not yet in force, and the selection of Hadrian as the partner in debate is truly poignant because of the issues of circumcision, which became even more topical when Christianity assumed control of the Roman empire. The *Yerushalmi*, and above all the *Midrashim*, elaborate on his imperial affiliation and proselyte anxiety. The aspect of conversion is particularly clear as a screen for contemporary debate and concern, with the restrictions that applied to proselytes turned into Aquila's pain about his distinct status even after his conversion had been completed.

If anything, Aquila became a legendary convert of Roman extraction, and it is this aspect of the tradition that the double-portrait of Onqelos the son of the Colonist elaborates upon in the context of the various modes of Roman–Jewish relationships. First Aquila emerges as the unassailable convert who thwarts any attempt by the Romans to capture him and converts hordes of soldiers to Judaism in the process. At one level, the narrative evinces the superiority of Judaism in the face of Roman military prowess. At another level, the soldiers are unable to capture the converted child of a veteran soldier. Ultimately, the narrative encapsulates that Rome and Jerusalem will remain in discord and animosity: 'the ties are broken' reflects not just on the failure of Antoninus to convert to Judaism but also on the Roman–Jewish relationship at large.

²⁵⁰ See section 8.4.

In the second portrait Aquila is revealed as an opportunist who raises Titus, Bilam and Jesus from the dead—violating Jewish law in similar vein as in some of the conversions of the previous cycle. Here his patronym ‘Colonicus’ is even more appropriate as the narrative is placed within the talmudic discussion of the *siqariqon*-law which deals with colonized property. Once more the narrative envisages relationships only as enmity and warfare, separation and isolation, or conversion, with a strong rebuttal of Jesus’ divinity along the way by reminding his followers that Jesus had bodily functions, unlike deities, but just like Pharaoh or Hiram.

The transformation of the role Aquila played in rabbinic literature comes full circle when he is portrayed as a proselyte who said the translation of the Tora in b. Meg. 3a—but his Greek ancestry is forgotten in the process, which enables the editor(s) of b. Meg. 3a to sever the ties to the Greek-speaking Jew in favour of an Aramaic-speaking prodigy in a quest to secure the Aramaic version of the Tora, which, apparently, required special pleading. That the last picture is starkly different from Onqelos bar Colonicus is evident. Onqelos the translator is a thinly veiled Greek protagonist. Aquila has been transformed to Onqelos and Aramaic the language he translated to, while his conversion and translational activity remain the same. To shore up the claims for the Targum now known as Onqelos, the anonymous voice appropriates Western traditions about Aquila and Theodotion which had nothing to do with the origin of the Aramaic translation. By contrast, the rabbinic citations of Aquila’s translations do not make the transition, only his reputation and the myth of his personality. The way Aquila translated, now devoid of his actual interpretations, is activated because he emerges as a figure of authority whose work commanded respect throughout the rabbinic tradition. Onqelos even became the agent of restoration when the translation to which his name is attached was rooted to the days of Ezra the Scribe and the public reading of the Tora—a translation once forgotten but reinstated by Onqelos.

Conclusion

Rabbinic literature famously refrains from sustained and systematic presentations of rabbinic thought, instead expressing its values and thought in an almost organic development of arguments and ever fluid received traditions. Sustained patterns and principles are nonetheless discernible but require a careful approach, for rabbinic literature spans more than one generation, more than one location, and more than one voice, anonymous or not. The multiple provenances orchestrated in the works of classical rabbinism obscure, perhaps on purpose, the historical developments which I have attempted to portray in the present study; perhaps on purpose, since by its very design the literature itself does not convey a heightened sense of and interest in history. Wherever it allows for context when addressing certain matters that context is primarily local but not historical.

This character of rabbinic thought also explains why studies of rabbinic views on languages and translations tend to provide a mosaic of ideas and statements, which must be harmonized or mitigated according to the rabbinic moulds provided wherever they appear to be in conflict. Symptomatic is the common neglect of the way the Mishna licenses scriptural translation as Holy Writ in modern accounts of the rabbinic views of translation. One of the necessary corrections this study sought to provide is the emphasis on the plurality of voices and development of thought within the rabbinic movement as far as it found expression in its literatures. Accordingly it does not seek to find the unified voice of the documents in question, but instead tries to discern what has been stifled in the process of historical developments, to listen to multiple voices and to identify stilted compromises.

The main observations of the present work as detailed in the preceding chapters may be summarized as follows. Even in the absence of a rabbinic notion that Hebrew is the mother of all languages, as only Jerome clearly expressed, rabbinic literature bespeaks the genealogical relationships between the languages and interprets etymologies and translations as if all languages are of a single family. That Hebrew is the mother of them all is almost invariably implied, but sometimes more forcefully and apologetically than at other times.

Language is not regarded as a conventional system but as a divine gift. Speech is the touchstone of humanity, distinguishing humankind from the animal world and connecting it with God and the angels. Despite the fragmentation of the Adamic language into the seventy tongues of the Noahites, all languages remained a close-knit family whose words shed semantic light on each other across linguistic barriers; despite the absence of understanding and communication on the part of the dispersed Noahites after the failure of the Tower of Babel, the principle of commensurability persists between the one and the seventy languages of the world. The semantic bearing other languages have on Hebrew comes perhaps most forcefully into expression in those traditions that have the motif of the seventy languages in common. God's Tora translates into seventy languages to capture the full range of its meaning. God's spoken word splits into seventy languages. Yet contrary to the unreservedly positive appraisal of the value and contribution other languages make to God's Tora and revelation, some dissonant voices spoke up as well, relating the seventy translations of Tora to the nations who are due severe punishment for that very reason; an initial appreciation of multilingualism and translation would at the very least in some circles be tinged with a wariness of translations.

While certain traditions suggest that translations came to be viewed with ever greater suspicion, especially if we take observations made in later chapters into account, without ever falling victim to its assailants, languages did not quite fare the same downwards slide. Throughout the period under consideration lexical equivalents of Hebrew words in another language could be cited as evidence for its precise semantic meaning. Rabbinic reflection on the use of languages remained fairly constant throughout the period under consideration, although the use of foreign etymologies may have dissipated to give way, eventually, to a semantics that is based almost entirely on Hebrew roots, a view in which Hebrew accounted all by itself for everything that is required to produce meaning. If anything, this development may explain the change from polyglossia to polyvalence as observed in Chapter One: a reduction to Hebrew rather than an expansion in polysemy. This turn of events, however, stretches over the period under consideration in this study, although it is not incompatible with the notion of Hebrew as the 'grammar' of creation already expressed in *Sefer Yešira* during the Amoraic period.

The perception of languages, and in particular the unique role that Hebrew played, comes to prominence in the concept of Hebrew as the holy tongue. Contrary to the cliché, early rabbinic Judaism does not label Hebrew the holy tongue or attach much value to the concept in any but a few selected rites, which, on closer analysis, have a hieratic connection. The holy tongue thus transpires as once a ritual language in close connection with the Temple and priestly proceedings. Yet detached from its socio-historical context, the editorial hand that moulded the Tosefta and particularly the Mishna on the rites that must be conducted in Hebrew reveals a renewed and new interest in the concept of the holy tongue, seizing the opportunity to emphasize an insistence on Hebrew that would soon be extended to other contexts and situations in a sustained effort to preserve the use of Hebrew as the religious language *pur sang*, if not a vernacular. The debate about language requirements often glosses over subtle contextual variations, such as the practices that had a bilingual component, which is all but overlooked in the dichotomic categorizations of rites. In the same process, an early emphasis on understanding liturgical and ritual texts, which inevitably enhanced the status of translations, gave way to an insistence on mechanical hearing rather than intellectual understanding.

To apprehend rabbinic thought on language in the multilingual context of Roman Palestine and the Diaspora we must assess the use, command, function and valuation of languages in Jewish society, which is notoriously difficult to achieve. The basic step of a language map for Jewish society already proves difficult to achieve beyond very broad generalizations. In certain cases we can extrapolate from epigraphical evidence which languages commanded prestige, or when Hebrew would seem to convey an ethnic and religious message, but our evidence rarely provides a clear mirror image of language command. The extent to which the Jewish population would be able to participate in a bilingual discourse in which one language is Hebrew cannot be inferred from documents written by those who could.

Nonetheless, there is ample evidence of literary and performative code-switching throughout the period under consideration, with the Qaddish a prime example of both. More frequently than not, no specific functions can be attached to the selection of one language or another, but what seems entirely contingent here may well be deliberate elsewhere. In the so-called

'double documents' the co-existence of two languages probably aims at legal clarity and validity for all the parties involved. Elsewhere, too, there may be a hint of deliberate differentiation, with Hebrew the language of choice for halakhically relevant narratives that serve as legal precedents and Aramaic the more folkloristic language. This is one particular area in which more research is needed than could be provided here. Our sources are likely to conceal the extent of code-switching that interpreters and rhetorics practised, which may even have been part of the rhetorical training of the *turgeman*. It does not follow that all parties at all times understood all the languages involved, but it is far more likely that the level at which most people would have switched between languages was much more restricted—the attempt to impose Hebrew on all prayers is a point in case. On a more positive note, the Hebrew-only rituals demonstrated that the rabbis varied their demands of language selection or provided prompting and interpretation according to the variation in the command of Hebrew. What can be inferred from the variation of languages and the responses of the rabbis is the constant factor of an insistence on, or at the very least preference for, the use of Hebrew, which shines through in many of the aspects of code-switching—just as it did in the case of the recontextualization of the notion of the holy tongue.

The terminology of translation, which is largely based on loanwords, underscores the oral-performative practice of translation. First and foremost, all sources and all rabbis agree on the necessity to distinguish the practice of translation from the original Hebrew text, notwithstanding some differences of opinion about translations and the languages to be used for them. A fairly consistent differentiation in terminology between Babylonian and Palestinian sources emerged in the way the verb *תרגם* 'interpret' developed into a term for halakhic resolutions for which Palestinian sources use the verb *אמר* 'say', already hinting at differences that existed between Babylonian and Palestinian sources as regards the status and the language of translations.

Still, the terminology conceals more than it reveals, for the literary record imposes a uniform and detailed practice of oral translation on local communities although its regularization undoubtedly took many centuries, first of all because of the linguistic diversity existing in the Jewish communities in Roman Palestine and the Diaspora, but also because of other reasons. Mention must be made of the lack of rabbinic control over

Jewish society during the first centuries CE until well into the Amoraic period, as recent studies have pointed out. But above all the uniformity keeps well-established but divergent practices out of sight. Rabbinic literature does not mention monolingual Greek recitation wherever it can, but its allowance for written Greek translations—even deemed כשר for all, in the same way recitation in Ashurit suffices whether or not the listener understands what is being read—attests to the needs of Greek-speaking Jews and the solid foundation for the use of Greek translations within Judaism. But the hints of a more widespread alternative practice, including reading the Scriptures from a written Greek manuscript, do not deny the overarching impression rabbinic literature yields of the all-importance and practice of chanting the Scriptures from the Hebrew original.

Rabbinic control tightened in respect of the selection of passages for translation during the synagogue liturgy, a process which once seemed finished by the end of the second century CE but which now appears to have dragged on for much longer. The anecdotal reports of R. Shmuel b. R. Yishāq about translations in practice in a fourth century CE synagogue may well affirm a true variation which the prescriptive side of rabbinic literature is less keen to acknowledge. Whether or not there was an agreed and sustained disapproval of written translations for all purposes, or just for the purpose of liturgical recitation—I have argued that the absolute denial of either possibility is unwarranted—one of the important conclusions is that translations once evidently deemed Holy Writ were reclassified as part and parcel of the Oral Tora. The driving force behind this paradigm shift is once more the insistence on and promotion of using the Hebrew source text, but for once we can see the hinterland of the new categories.

The changed perception of translations, whether Greek or Aramaic or indeed any other language, had ramifications for the understanding of some older maxims in the rabbinic tradition, which still licensed written translations as Holy Writ and did not yet envisage their future ensnarement as Oral Tora. Two *mishnayyot* in particular could be brought into play with each other to demonstrate and activate the problem (*m. Meg.* 1.8 and *m. Yad.* 4.5). The latter raised the status of the script in which Scripture was written to a powerful argument in favour of the new paradigm but the former still voiced a leniency towards written translations that bespoke the older situation and, accordingly, raised awkward questions. One of the solutions which met with wide approval was to distinguish the Scroll of

Esther from the rest of the Scriptures, not incidentally the one portion the recitation of which is a scriptural commandment according to the rabbinic tradition. But the reception of the former *mishna* in the *Bavli* shows that the goalposts were moved within that debate to single out the Tora from the rest of the Scriptures—and then to declare the Tora an incident rather than precedent related to King Talmai. Never would Greek be ruled out successfully, however, not even in one debate in the *Bavli*. Its foundation within the rabbinic tradition was simply too strong. The incident would remain a precedent, albeit one not applicable to the Aramaic scriptural translation, all voices having sided with Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel that only Greek had been sanctioned.

That translations also had a positive role to play and have been accorded an equivalent position in rabbinic thought is manifest in the rabbinic quotations of scriptural translations. Whether these translations concerned comprehensive translations of a book or chapters, or just an ad-hoc translation of a given verse, or even a citation of a lexical list of equivalents, is to a large extent irrelevant for the importance attached to their value when cited. More important perhaps is the textcritical basis for these citations, the study of which yielded some surprises and changed the perception of quite a few citations as later accretions. It is evident that the medieval period witnessed an almost antiquarian interest in preserving scriptural translation by supplementing existing discourse with secondary quotations, sometimes even when they arguably contradict the train of thought or are completely out of place.

These citations occur in distinct formats and concern, almost invariably, Greek and Aramaic. Conspicuous is the rather stark division of formats over sources and voices. Aquila is cited in Western sources, the (or a) Targum to the Prophets by Rav Yoseph and Targum Onqelos, 'as we translate', by named rabbis and the anonymous voice. More remarkable is the clear approval with which the Aquila translations are transmitted in comparison with the citations of the Prophets by Rav Yoseph, which generally do not leave their mark on the discussion; while the citations marked 'as we translate' of Targum Onqelos by named rabbis are all to the point and essential in their halakhic input, hence more like Aquila's. The rabbinic use of scriptural translation is consistent with the valuation of other languages as semantic repositories for the study of the Hebrew Bible, but the translations rarely became a source of rabbinic enquiries beyond

their function as a lexicographical resource, with the exception perhaps of the translations 'as we translate' by Rav Yoseph which are a valid source of objection. A second category of the citations 'as we translate', narrated by the anonymous voice, tends to fall into line with the previously observed scribal interest in preserving translations as lexical arguments. These cases tend to underscore a point already made in the main body of the discourse.

The remaining marked and unmarked translations do not change the picture other than their use as a lexical repository, whether they are indeed from a translation or an ad-hoc equivalent. As such they confirm that translations are of no account as a literary work in their own right. Indeed, translations which disagreed with hermeneutic turns of any halakhic discourse go freely ignored; targumic dissonances are not raised as objections (with the exception of Rav Yoseph's references to Onqelos). Only very rarely is the aggadic impact of the translations reason for citation. Translations are cited with rabbinic disapproval in the Yerushalmi, in one famous case concerning a translation still preserved in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. The Palestinian peers only have praise for Greek to spare, never for the Aramaic scriptural translations. It is significant, however, that this difference is cancelled out wherever unmarked translations are used as lexical arguments; the positive contribution languages make has not been abolished by the demarcation of the role for comprehensive scriptural translations.

Aquila's translations often have a layer surrounding them which contains a further exposition of the scriptural lemma. In some cases the general structure of the citations suggests that the original citation may even have dropped out during the textual transmission. The growth of the expository element suggests great antiquity and prominence, which is not incompatible with the legendary approval with which one of his translational efforts was met. In the final chapter the rabbinic reception of Aquila the Proselyte shows how the famous protagonist of Roman extraction became a screen for contemporary issues with proselytism, Jewish-Roman relations, Jewish pride, and eventually an ancient translation which Aquila, now as Onqelos, said, but actually reinstated, as a translation had been instituted back in the days of Ezra the Scribe. There is an organic element in the growth of the tradition, but we are evidently lightyears away from any historical proselyte. What is interesting is the fact that there was felt to be a need to justify the practice of translation.

Throughout all parts of this study foreign languages remain valued for their lexical and semantic input, which in its most forceful expression equates the seventy languages of the world with the one language of the Tora. By contrast, rabbinic views on scriptural translations vary according to provenance, period and purpose. Despite a certain consistency in the perception, conceptualization and use of languages and translation in the multilingual societies of the first millennium CE, the accumulated evidence points to a development in rabbinic thinking on both languages and translations, with certain tendencies even attested early on in the Tannaitic period. The increasing insistence upon the use of Hebrew in a variety of contexts would become the hallmark of the rabbinic movement, which prioritized its use as a religious and academic language, and preferred the use of Ashurit even when no longer understood to fulfil religious obligation, rather than the use of what used to be licensed translations. Yet rabbinic reflection never brought about a singular, monolithic view on the use of languages for the public recitation of Tora (and other books). Indeed, while certain coalescing tendencies on the topic of translation are indentifiable in the reception of certain legal traditions as well as the use scriptural translation is put to, it was only in the late Middle Ages, when established translations in Greek and Aramaic had lost their practical relevance both under Christendom and Islam, that rabbinic opinion more or less achieved a consensual view on the use of Bible translations. A long-term view on the development shows a tendency to reduce translations to optional, strictly oral, and secondary accompaniments of the religious obligation to read scriptural texts in Hebrew. But by the time that objective had been achieved, even foreign languages played a far less marked role in the elucidation of Hebrew words, Hebrew having become something of a self-contained source of meaning.

Appendix

b. Meg. 8b–9a

To facilitate a comparison of the major variant readings, the following text is presented in a hybrid format. The format combines features of a critical diplomatic text, with an apparatus spelling out any variant readings in other manuscripts and early editions, and features of a score, which presents each manuscript or edition on separate lines. The first line invariably represents the Yemenite MS ColX,¹ while the lines below collapse the textual evidence of all other textual witnesses into a few lines. These lines represent ad-hoc groups of manuscripts for that particular line which contain a major variant reading (plus, minus, alternative lexemes). Minor variant readings are presented along more traditional ways: a footnote in the main text corresponding to a list of variant readings in the apparatus. The abbreviations used for the textual witnesses can be found at pp. x-xiii above.

The groupings vary by block and the particular readings found for that stretch of text. Below these lines with the major readings, a base line indicates which manuscripts are represented in this block and to which groups the manuscripts or editions belong. For example, the following line is found in unit 2 below:

ColX Gött // Lon400 Mun140 Vat134 Pes1516 Vilna // Ox23 Mun95 Lon5558 TS F2(2)73

This base line indicates agreement between the manuscripts ColX and Gött, which are separated from the other witnesses by the symbol //. These two witnesses are represented in a text line that starts with ColX+ (the + indicates the presence of more than one witness in support of this text line). The next group of witnesses separated by // consists of Lon400, Mun140, Vat134, Pes1516 and Vilna, which are represented in a text line starting with Lon400+. And finally, the last text line, Ox23+, represents the remaining textual witnesses: Ox23, Mun95, Lon5558 and TS F2(2)73.

Shorter sigla for the witnesses would have been desirable. Unfortunately, there was no universally acclaimed list for Talmud manuscripts available at the time this book went to press. For the present appendix I

¹For this choice, see p. 304 n. 95 above.

decided not to depart from the relatively long sigla I used throughout this study.

Minor variant readings, involving grammar (variations of gender, variations of pronominal suffixes, prepositions), syntax (copulative *waw*, relative *-š*), spelling and abbreviations, are included in the notes to each line. The distinction between minor and major variants is, of course, arbitrary, and while the grammar of the Bavli is suitably pliant to render most of these variants semantically irrelevant, they may still have an impact on either the meaning or the history of the text. Because these variants relate to the individual lines, sometimes agreement between the lines can be hidden within these footnotes; most of these agreements, however, will have little to no value for the genealogy of the textual witnesses other than their intermediacy (a witness serving as the exemplar of another witness).

Variant readings relate to the text lines above via footnotes; for example, in unit 2, the first footnote 'Gött שיכתבו' indicates that Gött reads שיכתבו where ColX, which represents this manuscript according to the base line, reads שיכתבו. If more than one variant applies to a single text line reading, these have been separated by '—' in the footnote, while new footnotes are separated by '||' in the apparatus. If a reading in a text line is supported by a lacunary fragment or marginal reading, the footnote only gives the reading of that fragmentary or marginal witness.

The groups of witnesses do not represent genealogical divisions. The presentation summarizes manuscript agreements per line, not per variant reading. A division per individual reading for the purpose of building a stemma, or assessing the genealogical relationships between the textual witnesses, would have looked very different. For example, a line such as 'abc // de // fg' might have been broken up as 'abcde // fg' and 'abcfg // de'.

The format of the following transliteration is designed to give the reader access to all the variant readings in the manuscripts and editions I have used. It avoids the disadvantages of a classical edition, which prioritizes one version of the text over another, hides major variant readings and is unsuitable for texts with floating parts, and the disadvantages of a synopsis, which occupies much space, makes a document hard to read for long stretches of text and leaves a lot of work to the reader. Hopefully, the following hybrid format of b. Meg. 8b–9a accelerates any assessment of the various instantiations of the text: each additional text line contains at least one major variant reading.

I

ColX+	ורמינהי ¹ מקרא ² שכתבו תרגום ותרגום שכתבו ³ מקרא וכתב עברית ⁴
Ox23	ורמינהי תרגום שכתבו מקרא ומקרא שכתבו תרגום וכתב עברי
ColX Gött Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Muni40 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)73 // Ox23	
¹ ורמינהי ורמינהו Vilna TS F2(2)73 — ורמינהי Mun95 — ורמי Vatr34 ² מקרא מקר ² Mun95 ³ שכתבון שכתב ² Lon5558 ⁴ עברית ColX Lon400 — עברי Gött Mun95 Lon5558 Muni40 ⁵ עברי TS F2(2)73 Vilna Pes1516 Vatr34.	

2

ColX+	כולן אין מטמאין את הידים עד שיכתבו ¹ אשורית על הספר
Lon400+	אינו מטמא את הידים עד שיכתבו ² בכתב אשורית על הספר
Ox23+	אינו ³ מטמא ⁴ את הידים עד שיכתבו אשורית על הספר
ColX Gött // Lon400 Muni40 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna // Ox23 Mun95 Lon5558 TS F2(2)73	
¹ שיכתבון שיכתבו Gött ² שיכתבון שיכתבו Muni40 ³ אינו [אינו Lon5558 ⁴ מטמא מטמאין Lon5558.	

3

ColX+	בדיו ¹ אמ ² רבא לא קשיא כאן בגופין ³ שלנו כאן בגופין ⁴ שלהן
Vatr34	ובדיו א' רבא לא קשיא הא בגופו שלנו הא בגופו שלהן
TS F2(2)73	ובדיו אמר רבא לא קשיא כן בגופו שלנו כן בגופו שלהן
ColX Gött Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Muni40 Ox23 Pes1516 Vilna // Vatr34 // TS F2(2)73	
¹ בדיו ColX Lon5558 Pes1516 — ובדיו Gött Lon400 Mun95 Muni40 (*Muni40 ובדיו Ox23 Vilna ² אמ ² א' Lon5558 — אמר Vilna Pes1516 ³ בגופין בגופן Gött Lon400 Mun95 Muni40 ⁴ בגופין בגופן Ox23 Vilna Pes1516 — בגופו Lon5558 ⁵ שלהן שלהם Ox23 Muni40 Mun95 Lon400.	

4

ColX+	אמ' ליה ¹ אבאיי ² במאי אוקימתה ³ לההיא בגופין ⁴ שלהם ⁵
Gött	אמ' ליה אביי במאי אוקימתא לההיא בכתיבה שלהן
Ox23+	א"ל אביי במאי אוקימתה לבריתא בגופן שלהם ⁶
Mun95	א"ל אביי במאי אוקימתא להא כגופן שלהן
Lon5558	א' ליה אביי במאי אוקימתה להאי בגופן שלהן

ColX Lon400 Vatr34 TS F2(2)73 Muni40 Pes1516 Vilna // Gött // Ox23 // Mun95 // Lon5558.

¹אמ' ליה א"ל Vatr34 — אמר ליה Vilna Pes1516 || ²אבאיי אביי Gött Lon400 Vatr34 TS F2(2)73 || ³אוקימתה אוקימתא Vilna Pes1516 Lon400 — אוקימ' Muni40 — אוקימת' Vatr34 || ⁴בגופין בגופן Vilna Pes1516 Muni40 Lon400 TS F2(2)73 — בגופי Vatr34 || ⁵שלהם ColX Muni40 — שלהן Lon400 Vatr34 Vilna Pes1516 TS F2(2)73 || ⁶בריתא Muni40.

5

אי הכי ¹ מאי איריא ² מקרא שכתבו ³ תרגום ותרגום ⁴ שכתבו מקרא	ColX+
אי הכי מאי איריא מקרא שכתבו תרגום	Gött
א"ה מאי איריא תרגום שכתבו מקרא ומקרא שכתבו תרגום	Ox23
מאי איריא מקרא שכתבו תרגום ותרגו ⁵ שכתבו מקרא	Mun95*

ColX Lon400 Lon5558 Muni40 Vati34 TS F2(2)/73 // Gött // Ox23 // Mun95* Pes1516 Vilna.

¹אי הכי ColX Mun95^m Vati34 TS F2(2)/73 איהכי Lon400 Lon5558 || ²איריא אירי Vati34 || ³שכתבו שכת' Lon5558 || ⁴ותרגום ותרג' Lon400 || ⁵ותרגו ותרגום Vilna Pes1516.

6

אפלו ¹ מקרא שכתבו מקרא ותרגום שכתבו תרגום ² נמי	ColX+
אפלו מקרא שכתבו מקרא נמי	Gött
ואפילו תרגום שכתבו תרגום נמי ומקרא שכתבו מקרא נמי	Lon5558
אפילו תרגום שכתבו תרגום ומקרא שכתבו מקרא נמי	Ox23

ColX Lon400 Mun95 Muni40 Vati34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)/73 // Gött // Lon5558 // Ox23

¹אפלו אפ' Lon400 Mun95 Muni40 Vati34 Pes1516 || ²ותרגום ותרג' Pes1516

7

דהא תנן ¹ עד שיכתבו כתב ² אשורית	לא	ColX+
דהא קתני ³ עד שיכתבו אשורית		Gött+
דהא ⁴ קתני עד שיכתבו ⁵ אשורית ⁶	לא	Lon5558+
דהא קתני עד שיכתבו אשורית	לא מטמא את הידים והא	Ox23 ⁷

ColX Lon400 // Gött Muni40* // Lon5558 Mun95 Vati34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)/73 // Ox23+

¹תנן קתני Lon400 || ²כתב בכתב Lon400 || ³קתני קאתני Muni40 || ⁴דהא דקא Mun95 || ⁵שיכתבו שיכתבו Mun95 — שכתבו Vati34 || ⁶אשורית אשור' Vati34 || ⁷לא מטמא את הידים Muni40^m — אשורית Muni40^m.

8

על הספר בדיו ¹ אלא אידי ואידי בגופין ² שלנו ולא קשיא הא	ColX+
על הספר ³ ובדיו ⁴ אלא	Lon400+
בספר ובדיו ⁶ אלא	Lon5558+
לא קשיא הא	

ColX Gött // Lon400 Mun95 Ox23 Vati34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)/73 // Lon5558 Muni40

¹בדיו ובדיו Gött || ²בגופין בגופ' Gött || ³הספר ספר Vati34 || ⁴ובדיו בדיו Vilna Pes1516 || ⁵קשיא קשי' Vati34 || ⁶ובדיו בדיו Lon5558

9

ColX+	רבנן	הא רב ¹	שמעון ² בן גמליאל ³ אי
Lon5558+	רבן שמעון ⁴ בן גמליאל ⁵	הא רבנן	אי
Ox23+ ⁶	רבנן	והא רשב"ג	במאי
ColX Gött Lon400 Mun95 TS F2(2)73 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna // Lon5558 Muni400 // Ox23			
י ¹ רבן שמעון בן גמליאל רשב"ג ² Vatr34 Mun95 ש ² שמעון שמע' Lon400 TS F2(2)73 ג ³ גמליאל גמל' Muni400 ^m ש ⁴ שמעון ש ⁵ Lon5558 ג ⁵ גמליאל גמ' Lon5558 ב ⁶ במאי Muni400 ^m			

10

ColX+	רב ¹	שמעון ² בן גמליאל ³	עד ⁴
Ox23+ ⁵	אוקימתה לבריתא כרבן	שמעון	א"ה מאי איריא עד
Vilna+	רשב"ג ⁶		
ColX Gött Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Muni400 Vatr34 TS F2(2)73 // Ox23+ // Pes1516 Vilna			
י ¹ רבן שמעון בן גמליאל רשב"ג ² Vilna Vatr34 Mun95 ש ² שמעון שמע' Lon400 TS F2(2)73 — ש ³ גמליאל גמל' Lon5558 ג ³ גמליאל גמל' Lon400 TS F2(2)73 ע ⁴ עד lacuna TS F2(2)73 ש ⁵ אוקימת' לברית' כרבן שמעון בן גמליאל אי הכי מאי איריא עד Muni400 ^m רשב"ג ⁶ רבן שמעון בן גמליאל Pes1516			

11

ColX	שיכתבנו כתב	אשורית	והא איכא	כתב יונית
Gött+	שיכתבנו	אשורית	הא איכא	יוני
Muni40+	שיכתב ¹ כתב ²	אשורית	הא איכא נמי	יונית ³
Vatr34+ ⁴	שיכתבנו	אשורי	והא איכא נמי	יוונית
Mun95 ⁵	שיכתבנו	אשורית על הספר ובדיו והאיכא נמי		יוונית
Ox23	שיכתבנו	אשורית על הספר ובדיו והא איכא		יונית
Lon5558	שיכתבו ⁶	אשורית	אפילו	יונית
Vilna+			הא איכא	יונית
ColX // Gött // Muni400 Lon400 // Vatr34 TS F2(2)73 // Mun95 // Ox23 // Lon5558 // Vilna				
Pes1516				

י¹שיכתב' שיכתבנו Lon400 || כ²כתב] בכתב Lon400 || י³יונית] יוונית Lon400 || ש⁴שיכתבנו אשורי והא error lacuna TS F2(2)73 || ש⁵שיכתבנו אשורית על הספר ובדיו Muni400^m || ש⁶שיכתבנו] error

12

ColX+	אלא לא קשיא כאן בספרים ¹	כאן בתפלין ² ומזוזות ותפלין ³ ומזוזות
Gött+	אלא לא קשיא כאן בספרים	כאן בתפלין ⁴ ומזוזות
Lon5558	נמי אלא לא קשיא כן בספרים כן בתפלין ומזוזות תפ' ומזו'	
ColX Lon400 Mun95 Ox23 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)73 // Gött Muni400* // Lon5558		
י ¹ בספרים] בספרי Vatr34 Mun95 כ ² בתפלין] בתפילין Lon400 Mun95 Ox23 Muni400 Pes1516 ג ³ תפלין] תפילין Muni400 ^m ע ⁴ תפלין] תפילין Vatr34 Ox23 Muni400 ^m ש ⁵ תפלין] בתפילין TS F2(2)73 ש ⁶ תפלין] בתפילין Muni400 ^m		

I3

¹ ColX+	מאי טעמא ²	דכת' ³ בהו ⁴ והיו בהוייתן יהו	
⁵ Mun95+	מאי טעמא לא	דכת' בהו והיו בהוייתן יהו	אי הכי
⁶ Ox23+	מ"ט לא	דכת' בהו והיו בהוייתן יהו התם	
Vilna+	מ"ט	משום דכתיב בהו ויהו בהוייתן יהו	

ColX Lon400 Muni40 Vatr34 Lon5558 TS F2(2)73 // Mun95 // Ox23 // Vilna Pes1516

¹ after [...] lacuna in TS F2(2)73 || ² טעמאן טעמ' Vatr34 Gött — טע' Lon400 Lon5558 || ³ דכת' || ⁴ בהו || ⁵ דכת' Lon5558 — דכת' Muni40 || ⁶ התם || ⁷ Muni40^m || deleted word Muni40* || ⁸ אי הכי Lon400^m || ⁹ התם || Muni40^m

I4

ColX+	ומאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא	
Gött+	מאי ¹ תרגום ² שכתבו מקרא איכא	בשלמא ³ תורה
Mun95	מאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא	בשלמא תורה תרגום
Lon5558		בשלמא תורה
Muni40*	ומאי ⁴ תרגום שכתב ⁵ מקרא איכא ביניהו ⁶	בשלמא תורה

ColX Ox23 // Gött Lon400 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)73 // Mun95 // Lon5558 // Muni40*

¹ [מאי] TS F2(2)73 [...] || ² תרגום] תרגו' Pes1516 || ³ בשלמאן בשל' Lon400 — בשלמ' Vatr34 || ⁴ ומאי || ⁵ שכתב] שכתבו Muni40^m || ⁶ ביניהו] deleted, Muni40* or Muni40^m ||

I5

ColX+		
Gött+	איכא יגר ¹ שהדותא ² אלא ³ הכא	מאי ⁴ תרגום
Mun95	שכתבו מקרא איכא יגר שהדותא אלא הכא	מאי תרגום
Lon5558	איכא יגר שהדותא אלא תפילין ומזוזות מאי תרגום	

ColX Ox23 // Gött Lon400 Muni40 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)73 // Mun95 // Lon5558

¹ [יגר] [גר?] Muni40* || ² שהדותאן שהדותא Lon400 Muni40 || ³ אלאן אל' Muni40* || ⁴ מאי || ⁵ (deleted Muni40^m) Muni40* ? + ||

I6

ColX+	אלא	לא קשיא כאן בספרים כאן
Gött	שכתבו מקרא איכא אלא אמ' רב נחמן לא קשיא כאן בספרים כאן	
¹ Lon400+	שכתבו ² מקרא איכא ³ אלא	לא קשיא ⁴ כאן בספרים ⁵ כאן
Vilna	איכא אלא	לא קשיא כאן במגילה כאן

ColX Ox23 // Gött // Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Muni40 Vatr34 // Pes1516 Vilna

¹ שכתבו מקרא [...] || כאן בספרים כאן TS F2(2)73 || ² שכתבו] שכתוב Muni40* || ³ איכא] איכ' Vatr34 || ⁴ קשיא] קשי' Vatr34 || ⁵ בספרים] בספרי' Mun95 ||

17

ColX+	במגלה ¹ מגלה ² מאי ³ טעמא	דכת'	ככתבם וכלשונם
⁴ Ox23	במגלה מגלה מאי טעמא	דכת'	ככתבם וכלשונם והתם
Gött+	במגלה ⁵ מאי טעמ'	דכת'	בה ככתבם כלשונם ⁶
Lon400+	במגילה מגילה מאי טע' ⁷	משום דכת'	ככתבם וכלשונם
Lon5558	במגילה מגלה מא טע'	דכ'	בה ככתבם וכלשונם והתם
Mun140	במגלה ⁸ מגלה מאי טעמ'	משום דכת'	בה ככתבם וכלשונם
Vilna+	בספרים מגילה מאי טעמא	דכתיב	בה ככתבם וכלשונם

ColX TS F2(2)/73 // Ox23 // Gött Vat134 // Lon400 Mun95 // Lon5558 // Mun140 // Pes1516

Vilna

¹במגלה במגילה TS F2(2)/73 || ²מגלה מגילה TS F2(2)/73 || ³מאי טעמא מ"ט Ox23 || ⁴התם
Mun140^m || במגלה במגי' Vat134 || ⁶כלשונם וכלשונם Vat134 || ⁷טע' טעמא Mun95 || ⁸במגלה
|| deleted by Mun140* in-line במזווית

18

ColX	ומאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא בשלמא תורה איכא יגר שהדותא
Ox23	מאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא בשלמ' תורה דכתי' יגר שהדותא
Gött+	מאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא
Vat134	מאי תרגו' שכתבו מקרא

ColX // Ox23 // Gött Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Mun140 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)/73 // Vat134

19

ColX	תניא הכא מאי תרגום שכתבו מקרא איכא אמ' רבא ונשמע
Ox23	אלא הכא מאי היא אמ' רב פפא ונשמע
Gött	אמ' רבא ונשמע
Lon400+	אמ' ¹ רב פפא ונשמע

ColX // Ox23 // Gött // Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Mun140 Vat134 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)/73

|| ¹אמ' א' Vat134 — אמר Vilna Pes1516

20

ColX+	פתגם המלך אשר יעשה	רב נחמן בר יצחק אמ' וכל
Gött+	פתגם ¹ המלך	רב נחמן בר יצחק אמ' ² וכל
Lon400	פתגם המלך וגו'	רב נחמן אמ' וכל
Mun95+	פתגם המלך	רב נחמן אמ' ³ וכל
Ox23	פתגם המלך אשר יעשה בכל מלכותו רב נחמן בר יצחק אמ' וכל	
TS F2(2)/73	פתגם המלך אשר יעשה	רב נחמן אמ' וכל

ColX Mun140 // Gött Lon5558 Pes1516 Vilna // Mun95 Vat134 // Lon400 // Ox23 // TS F2(2)/73

|| ¹פתגם פתג' Pes1516 || ²אמ' א' Pes1516 — אמר Vilna || ³אמ' א' Vat134

21

ColX+	הנשים ¹ יתנו יקר לבעליהן רב אשי אמ' ² כי תניא ³ ההיא אשאר ⁴ ספרים ⁵
Gött	הנשים יתנו יקר לבעליהן רבה אמ' כי תניא ההיא אשאר ספרים
Mun95	הנשים יתנו יקר לבעליהן רב אשי אמ' מתניא ההיא בשאר ספרים
Ox23	הנשים יתנו יקר לבעליהן רב אשי אמ' ההיא בשאר ספרים
ColX Lon400 Lon5558 Muni40 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)73 // Gött // Mun95 // Ox23	
¹ הנשים] הנשינ Lon5558 — הנשי Vatr34 אמ' אמר Vilna Pes1516 Muni40 — א' Vatr34 ² תניא] תני Vatr34 ³ אשאר] בשאר Vilna Pes1516 Vatr34 Muni40 Lon400 — אשאר TS F2(2)73 — בשאר בשאר Lon5558 ⁴ ספרים] ספר Vatr34 — lacuna in TS F2(2)73	

22

ColX+	ר' יהודה ² היא ³ דתניא ⁴ תפלין ⁵
Gött+	ור' יהודה היא דתניא שאר ספרים נכתבין בכל לשון תפלין ⁶
ColX Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna // Gött Muni40 Ox23	
¹ ר' ור' Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Vatr34 — ורבי Vilna Pes1516 ² יהודה] יהוד' Mun95 Lon400 ³ היא] ה' Vatr34 ⁴ דתניא] דתנן Vatr34 ⁵ תפלין] תפילין Vatr34 Lon5558 Mun95 Lon400 Pes1516 ⁶ תפלין] תפילין Muni40	

23

ColX+	ומוזוזת אינך ¹ נכתבין ² אלא אשורית ורבותינו ³ התירו שיכתבו יונית ⁴
Gött	ומוזוזת אין נכתבין ⁵ אלא אשורית ⁶ ורבותינו ⁷ התירו יונית ⁸
ColX Muni40 Ox23 // Gött Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Vatr34 Pes1516 Vilna	
¹ אינך] אין Muni40 ² נכתבין] נכתבות Ox23 ³ רבותינו] רבותי Ox23 ⁴ יונית] יונית Ox23 ⁵ נכתבין] נכתבות Vatr34 Lon400 ⁶ אשורית] אשורי Vatr34 ⁷ רבותינו] רבותי Vatr34 ⁸ יונית] יונית Vatr34 Mun95 Lon400 Pes1516	

24

ColX+	התירו והא כת' ¹ והיו אלא אימא ² ספרים
Gött	והכת' והיו בהוייתן יהו אלא אימא ספרים
Lon400+	התירו יונית הא כת' ³ בהו והיו אלא ⁴ אימא ⁵ ספרים
Muni40+	והא כתי ⁶ בהו והיו אלא אימא ⁷ ספרים
Vatr34*	
Vilna+	והכתיב והיו אלא אימא ספרים
ColX Lon5558 Ox23 // Gött // Lon400 Mun95 // Muni40 Vatr34 ^m // Vatr34* // Vilna Pes1516	
¹ והא כת'] והא כתיב Lon5558 — והכתי Ox23 ² אימא] אמ' Ox23 ³ הא כת'] והכתי Mun95 ⁴ אלא] last letter almost entirely in lacuna — אלא Mun95 ⁵ הא כת'] הכת' Vatr34 ^m ⁶ אימא] אימ' Vatr34 ^m Mun95 ⁷ אימא] אימ' Mun95 ⁸ long haplography in Vatr34*	

25

ColX+	נכתבין	בכל לשון ורבותינו ¹	התירו שיכתבו ²	יונית ³	התירו מכלל ⁴
Gött+	נכתבין ⁵	בכל לשון ורבותינו	התירו	יונית ⁶	מכלל
Lon400+	נכתבין ⁷	בכל לשון ורבותינו	התירו	יונית ⁸	התירו מכלל
Lon5558	נכתבין	בכל לשון ורבותינו	התירו	יונית	התירו
ColX Ox23 // Gött Mun95 Vat134 // Lon400 Muni40 Pes1516 Vilna // Lon5558					
י'רבותינן ורבותי Ox23 ² שיכתבן Muni40 ^m ³ יונית] יונית Ox23 ⁴ מכלל] TS F2(2)/73 ⁵ נכתבין] נכתבים Vilna Vat134 ⁶ יונית] יונית Mun95 ⁷ נכתבין] נכתבים Vilna ⁸ יונית] יונית Pes1516					

26

ColX	דתנא קמא ¹	אסר	הא בכל לשון קא אמ' אלא אימא רבותינו
Gött+	דתנא קמא	אסר ²	אלא אימא ³ רבותינו
Lon400	דתנא קמא	אסר	אימא רבותינו
Lon5558	מאן אסריה		אלא אימא רבותינו
ColX // Gött Mun95 Muni40 Ox23 Vat134 Pes1516 Vilna // Lon400 // Lon5558			
י'דתנא קמא] TS F2(2)/73 ² אסר] (סבר) אסר Muni40 ³ אימא] אימ' Mun95 Ox23 Vat134			

27

ColX+	לא	התירו שיכתבו	אלא	יונית
Lon400	אמרו שלא	יכתבו	אלא בלשון	יונית
Ox23+	אמרו שלא ¹	יכתבו ²	אלא	יונית
Vat134	התירו יונו' התירו יונית	שלא	יכתבו	אלא אשורי' יונית
ColX Gött Pes1516 Vilna // Lon400 // Ox23 Mun95 Lon5558 Muni40 // Vat134				
י'שלא] לא Mun95 ² יכתבו] שיכתבו Lon5558 ³ יונית] יונית Muni40 Lon5558				

28

ColX+	ותניא אמ' ר' יהודה	אף כשהתירו רבותינו	יונית ³	לא התירו
Gött+	ותניא ⁴	ר' יהודה אומ' אף כשהתירו רבותינו	יונית ⁵	לא התירו
Lon400	ותניא אמ' ר' יהודה	אף כשהתירו	יונית	לא התירו
Mun95	ור' יהודה אמ'	אף כשהתירו רבותי	יונית	לא התירו
Muni40	תניא אמ' ר' יהודה	אף כשהתירו רבותינו	יונית ⁶	לא התירו
Ox23	א"ר יהודה	אף כשהכשירו	יונית	לא התירו
ColX Vat134 Pes1516 Vilna // Gött Lon5558 // Lon400 // Mun95 // Muni40 // Ox23				

[...] לא התירו TS F2(2)/73 || ²ר' רבי Vilna Pes1516 || ³יונית] יוני' Vat134 — יונית Pes1516 || ⁴ותניא] תניא (preceded by a paragraph space) Lon5558 || ⁵רבותינו] רבי' Lon5558 || ⁶minus in || Muni40^m יונית, Muni40^{*} ||

29

אלא בספר תורה משום ¹ מעשה	ColX+
אלא בספר תורה ובמעשה	Gött
יוונית אלא בספר תורה משום מעשׂה דתלמי המלך מאי היא ²	Lon400
אלא בספר תורה ומשום מעשה דתלמי המלך מאי היא	Ox23
אלא בספר תורה ומשום ³ מעשה דתלמי ⁴ המלך	TS F2(2)/73+
אלא בספר תורה משום מעשה דתלמי	Lon5558
ColX Vat134 // Gött // Lon400 // Ox23 // TS F2(2)/73 Mun95 Muni40 Pes1516 Vilna // Lon5558	
¹ [משום] ומשום Vat134 ² מאי היא Muni40 ^m ³ [משום] משום Mun95 ⁴ [דתלמי] תלמי Mun95	

30

שהיו דתניא מעשה בתלמי המלך שלקח שבעים	ColX
שהיה דתניא מעשה בתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים	Gött
שהיה דתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים	Vat134
דתניא מעשה בתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים	Lon400+
אבל שאר ספרים לא תניא מעשה בתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים	Muni40
ColX // Gött // Vat134 // Lon400 Mun95 Lon5558 Ox23 Pes1516 Vilna TS F2(2)/73 // Muni40	

31

ושנים זקנים והושיבם ² בשבעים ושנים בתים ולא גילה להן	¹ ColX+
זקנים והושיבם בשבעים בתים ולא גלה להם	Gött
ושנים זקנים והכניסן לתוך שבעים ³ ושנים בתים ולא גילה להן	Lon5558
ושנים והושיבן בשבעי ⁴ ושני ¹ בתים ולא גילה ⁴	Vat134
ColX Lon400 Mun95 Muni40 Ox23 // Lon5558 Pes1516 Vilna // Gött // Vat134	
¹ ושנים זקנים והושיבן TS F2(2)/73 ² [והושיבם] והושיבום Lon400 ³ [לתוך שבעים] בשבעי Pes1516	
— בשבעים Vilna ⁴ להן Vat134 ^m	

32

על מה כינסן ²	¹ ColX+
על מה הושיבם	Mun95
עצה על מה כינסן	Lon5558
ColX Gött Lon400 Muni40 Ox23 Vat134 Pes1516 Vilna // Mun95 // Lon5558	
¹ כינסן] כנסם Gött — כינסם Lon400 Muni40 Vat134 — כנסן Ox23	

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